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DEVELOPING A DISCIPLE-MAKING PROGRAM FOR ROSS  
BAPTIST CHURCH IN GARY, INDIANA

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Educational Ministry

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by  
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May 2023

**APPROVAL SHEET**

DEVELOPING A DISCIPLE-MAKING PROGRAM FOR ROSS  
BAPTIST CHURCH IN GARY, INDIANA

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To my wife, Amanda, who is a wonderful partner and mother  
as well as a constant reminder of God's love and grace.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
PREFACE .....	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Context .....	1
Rationale .....	5
Purpose .....	7
Goals .....	7
Research Methodology .....	7
Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations .....	8
Conclusion .....	9
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR DISCIPLE-MAKING .....	10
Matthew 28:16-20 .....	10
Deuteronomy 6:4-9 .....	16
Second Timothy 2:1-8 .....	21
Ephesians 4:1-12 .....	27
Conclusion .....	32
3. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO DISCIPLE-MAKING .....	33
The Gospel and Evangelism .....	34
Scripture .....	38

Chapter	Page
Prayer .....	45
Church Membership .....	52
Conclusion .....	58
<b>4. DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPING DISCIPLE-MAKERS .....</b>	<b>60</b>
Curriculum Development .....	60
Curriculum Evaluation .....	61
Project Promotion .....	62
Pre-Project Disciple-Making Survey .....	63
Teaching the Curriculum .....	66
Conclusion .....	74
<b>5. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT.....</b>	<b>75</b>
Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose .....	75
Evaluation of the Project’s Goals .....	76
Strengths of the Project .....	82
Weaknesses of the Project .....	84
What I Would Do Differently .....	85
Theological Reflections .....	87
Personal Reflections .....	88
Conclusion .....	90
<b>Appendix</b>	
<b>1. DISCIPLE-MAKING ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>2. CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>3. T-TEST: PAIRED TWO SAMPLE FOR MEANS .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>98</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Evaluation of the curriculum .....	61
2. Ages of the participants .....	64
3. Highest pre-project survey scores .....	64
4. Lowest pre-project survey scores .....	65
5. Largest changes in scores .....	79
6. Smallest changes in scores .....	81

## PREFACE

This ministry project would not have been possible without the support of so many individuals. First, I am thankful for God saving me and calling me into pastoral ministry. This doctoral program has allowed me to grow in my understanding and application of biblical spirituality and will impact me long into the future.

I want to also thank my supervisor, Dr. Donald Whitney. I first read his book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* many years ago and it became so formative for my own Christian growth. To study under him during my masters program and now to have him as an advisor for my doctorate has been an incredible blessing.

I also am so grateful for the support of Ross Baptist Church. The church has cared for me for a decade and I am so thankful for their support generally and specifically with the completion of this project. I am truly honored to serve as the pastor of RBC.

I want to thank my local association of pastors. They have provided friendship and guidance to me, as well as constructive feedback on my survey and curriculum. It is truly good to have brothers in ministry.

Finally, I want to thank my family. My wife Amanda has been such an encouragement throughout the process. I am thankful for my three children, who are a true blessing from the Lord. Thank you to my parents and in-laws who continue to support me. God has truly been good to me and I am incredibly and eternally grateful.

Andrew Moore

Gary, Indiana

May 2023

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, the members of Ross Baptist Church adopted a new mission statement: “To Make and Develop Passionate Followers of Jesus Christ.” To this point, that mission statement has been aspirational. While the practice of making and developing disciples has been neglected, Jesus made it clear in both his lifestyle (Matt 4:19) and in his teachings (Matt 28:18-20) that this task is essential and the means by which he builds his church (Matt 16:17-18). To minister biblically and effectively to the people of Northwest Indiana, it was essential that Ross Baptist Church develop a mentality and practice of disciple-making.

#### **Context**

Ross Baptist Church (RBC) is a congregation of about sixty active members in Gary, Indiana. The church came out of a church planting endeavor several decades ago. In the 1950s and 1960s, several Southern Baptist churches were planted in the area to meet the need of migrating evangelicals from the south, who moved north for work in the steel mills. That constant migration kept churches full as people looked for churches similar to what they experienced back home. In the last several decades, most of the churches in the area have plateaued or declined. Northwest Indiana is currently home to about twenty Southern Baptist churches.

I was called as a youth and education pastor in the summer of 2013. During my time at RBC, the church has experienced some challenging times. In 2015, the senior pastor retired and I was asked to serve as interim pastor. In 2017, a new senior pastor was called but his tenure lasted only six months. During these four years, several individuals left the

church either because of the absence of a pastor, a lack of satisfaction with the new pastor, or frustration with how the new pastor's tenure ended. In 2018 I was approached to take on the role of senior pastor. The transition has been difficult, but the church members are desirous to be faithful to God's call to serve the area of Northwest Indiana. Since I became senior pastor, we have also had to endure the COVID pandemic. We chose to follow state guidelines as much as possible, which was popular with some members and not with others. While attendance has been slowly rising, we are still not back to pre-pandemic attendance or giving levels.

Taking on the role of senior pastor was a daunting task. RBC has had much pastoral turnover since the retirement of its founding pastor, a situation that has often caused the church to lose its sense of mission or purpose. Some of that loss has been attributed to calling pastors who were poor leaders, and some of it to an unwillingness of some of the members to be led. With no previous pastoral experience and in a church with no recent history of stable leadership, I endeavored to become deeply knowledgeable of the church membership. I knew change was necessary, but first wanted to ensure that I knew the people and dynamics of the church well. As a result, during my time as pastor, I have come to experience the blessing of a congregation that loves and supports me.

One of the strengths of RBC is its history in this area. Over the years, hundreds of people have been helped by this church in various ways. Many people in the community have a sense of respect for the church and what it has done for the community. Over time, different relationships have formed, allowing the church to work with others outside the four walls of the building. The church has a particularly good relationship with the local school system, where the church helps with various tasks and provides Christmas gifts for children.

Another strength of the church is the commitment of its members. Almost every person who attends corporate worship also attends a Sunday school class. A substantial

number also attend both Sunday and Wednesday evening services. With the onset of COVID-19 and members being unable to attend, giving has not fallen off significantly. There is a strong sense of community among the members. While the church cannot offer all of the programs that a larger church can, the church has done well with building personal connections among members. The church is a friendly place where guests feel welcome. Church members do a good job reaching out to all who attend.

Another strength of the church is its emphasis on prayer. Corporate gatherings contain public prayer for confession and petition. The church has a Wednesday night prayer meeting where time is spent praying each week for the church, its ministries, lost individuals by name, and various church and societal needs. The church has a detailed prayer list that is sent out and updated frequently. Also, members regularly contact each other with various prayer requests. Prayer is regarded by the members as an important part of the Christian's life.

An additional strength of the church is an increasing flexibility to change. The church has functioned with the same programs and protocols for several years. Two years ago, the church agreed to enter into an intentional revitalization process. That process meant bringing in outside pastors and local association workers to evaluate everything about the church. RBC agreed to look and evaluate almost everything about the church except its commitment to Scripture and the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. Since then, a few changes have been proposed and implemented. While not everything has been unanimous, there is an increased willingness to distinguish between what is essential and what is not for ministry in Northwest Indiana. This increase in flexibility is important as the church looks to make needed changes.

The primary weakness of RBC is its lack of intentional disciple-making. The church's mission statement is an aspirational statement. The church has not had much success in making disciples. That is shown in the fact that while many have been baptized and joined the church over the last several decades, the church has been in decline for a

long time. The official membership is full of names of individuals who no longer attend. In the past, disciple-making was attempted through classes and programs, like Sunday school, but the idea of walking alongside another believer in intentional mentoring and training has not been part of the church culture. The lack of intentional disciple-making has resulted in many shallow believers who are weak in both theology and practice, as well as individuals falling away from the church. RBC needs to take more seriously the call of Hebrews 10:24 to “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works” and to grow in the belief that the Christian life is lived with intentional and meaningful connection with other believers.<sup>1</sup>

Discipleship programming at RBC has historically had an over-emphasis on moralism and an under-emphasis on gospel transformation. Most RBC members are blue collar, very task-oriented people. They gravitate to sermons and teaching that emphasize behavior modification. While the Bible does teach the importance of right behavior, that work is always to be the product of a God-centered life (Phil 2:12-13). Members understand checking off daily Bible reading but few understand deep meditation on the Word of God. It is difficult to get members to understand that Christianity is not primarily about what believers do, but what Christ does. The lack of understanding that Christianity is primarily a work of God’s grace can lead to a pharisaical attitude among some members, and lead others to look condescendingly on the immorality of the outside community but fail to grow in inward holiness themselves.

The lack of training in intentional disciple-making has also resulted in church members becoming reliant on the church service as the primary place that evangelism occurs. The thought among many members is that lost individuals will come to the church on their own initiative, hear the gospel presented from the pulpit, and respond. The worship service then exists primarily as a salvation opportunity for the lost. While this

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

understanding of worship was always a questionable strategy since the Bible indicates that the worship service is primarily for the edification of believers (1 Cor 14:12), it has become even less helpful as fewer people visit the church. Since members are not trained to make disciples, there is little evangelism outside corporate gatherings.

### **Rationale**

The first reason that the church needed to develop a method of producing disciples is because the Bible commands it. The Great Commission serves as a mandate for all believers to make disciples (Matt 28:18-20). Since the Bible commands it, there needs to be a system to do it. For far too long RBC has been concerned with making converts, but not disciples. Ephesians 4 tasks church leadership with equipping church members for the work of ministry. There needs to be a return to the biblical calling to make disciples.

Another reason the church needed to develop a method of producing disciples was that the membership is made up of individuals who are relatively immature in their faith. COVID-19 has shown how reliant members are on the pastor and leaders. There needs to be a deepening of personal faith and an individual ownership of it. The church is aging rapidly. Like many churches, RBC is reliant on older members as leaders and teachers. This will not work long term. Titus 2 makes it clear that the church should see to it that older men and women teach and pass on what they have learned to younger men and women. It is imperative that older members are equipped to pass on what they have learned to younger members.

A third reason the church needed to develop a method of producing disciples was because the members are already being discipled by other sources. People are inundated with television, radio, social media, and other sources of information. Those sources of information have a catechizing effect on the congregation. The results are seen in the rejection of biblical morality, embracing a political ideology over a theological one, and in becoming shallow in theological thinking. It is clear that one hour a week of

preaching and teaching is not enough to drown out the other hours that are at work in the hearts of RBC members. Proverbs 11:14 states that where there is no biblical guidance, people fall. RBC needs to provide spiritual guidance.

A fourth reason that the church needed to develop a method of producing disciples was that the RBC leadership needed to prepare members for whatever the future brings. Most RBC members have attended this church almost every Sunday morning for decades. COVID-19 has shown that believers cannot assume the ability to always gather. If that is true, then it is imperative that the RBC leadership prepare its members to take disciple-making out of the confines of corporate gathering into their homes and social circles. Christianity cannot be compartmentalized to Sunday morning but needs to be worked out, in various avenues and relationships, all week long (Deut 6; Eph 4).

A fifth reason RBC needed to develop a method of making disciples is that generations are being lost. The average age of the membership skews much older than it should. An entire row of children's classrooms is no longer being used because we do not need the space with current makeup of the church. Not only do we need parents to bring their children to church, but we need parents who are equipping their children at home. Disciple-making is not only for adults discipling adults, but it must also include church and home discipling of children how to follow Christ as well.

A sixth reason that the church needed to develop a method of producing disciples was the imperative of making disciples outside the current membership. For years, the model for RBC has been to only disciple those who stepped onto campus. Discipling outside the church will enable members to reach people who, for whatever reason, do not attend RBC. This change in strategy would set the members up to serve as missionaries in their separate families and communities. The members of RBC need to be trained and equipped in such a way to be willing to go, as Isaiah was, wherever God will send them to reach people with the gospel (Isa 6:8).

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to develop a disciple-making program for Ross Baptist Church in Gary, Indiana.

## **Goals**

To fulfill the purpose of this project the following goals needed to be completed.

1. The first goal was to assess the understanding of disciple-making among members of Ross Baptist Church.
2. The second goal was to develop a training curriculum for disciple-making.
3. The third goal was to equip members of Ross Baptist Church by teaching a disciple-making curriculum over eight weekly sessions.

## **Research Methodology**

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of the three goals. The first goal was to assess the understanding of disciple-making among members of Ross Baptist Church. This was measured by administering a Disciple-Making Survey (DMS) to members of the church to analyze their understanding and practice of disciple-making.<sup>2</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when thirty members completed the survey and the results were evaluated to determine the current understanding and practices of disciple-making among the membership of Ross Baptist Church.

The second goal was to develop a training curriculum for disciple-making. This curriculum was developed by incorporating biblical and historical methods of disciple-making. This curriculum was assessed by an expert panel of local pastors who evaluated the curriculum for biblical fidelity and practicality.<sup>3</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 2.

exceeded the sufficient level. If the 90 percent benchmark had not been met, then I would have revised the material until it met the standard.

The third goal was to equip members of Ross Baptist Church by teaching a disciple-making curriculum over eight weekly sessions. This goal was measured by readministering the DMS, which was used to measure the change in the biblical and historical understanding of disciple-making before and after the curriculum was presented.<sup>4</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test of the group surveyed demonstrated a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-DMS scores.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

*Disciple.* In his book *Disciple*, seminary professor Chuck Lawless describes a disciple as “simply a follower of Christ in the process of being conformed to his image.”<sup>5</sup> In *Deep Discipleship*, pastor J.T. English describes a disciple as “someone who has received the identity of the Triune God through baptism and who follows the teachings of Christ through obedience.”<sup>6</sup> Consistent with these definitions, in this project a *disciple* is defined as one who has been saved through faith in Jesus Christ and who follows in the teachings of Christ through obedience.

*Disciple-making.* The Great Commission calls every Christian to be a disciple who makes disciples. Mark Dever, author of *Discipling*, rightly observes that disciples should be dedicated to helping others follow Jesus. The implications of these statements lead to the definition of *disciple-making* used in this project. *Disciple-making* is the

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> Chuck Lawless, *Disciple: How to Create a Community That Develops Passionate and Healthy Followers of Jesus*, Church Answers (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2022), 6.

<sup>6</sup> J. T. English. *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B & H, 2020), 62.

intentional training of another believer to follow the teachings of Christ through obedience.<sup>7</sup>

One limitation of this project was the honesty of the individuals on the survey regarding their knowledge and understanding of disciple-making. To mitigate this, the survey was administered anonymously. A second limitation was the consistency of attendance for all of the training sessions. To mitigate this limitation, the sessions were on a consistent day at a consistent time. The sessions were also recorded so that if a session was missed by a participant, he or she could watch the session later.

One delimitation of this project was that it was open only to RBC members. A second delimitation was that the training was held in person on the campus of RBC. A third delimitation was that the project was confined to a seventeen-week period. A fourth delimitation was that the curriculum was taught in eight sessions.

### **Conclusion**

In the Great Commission, every believer is called to not only be a disciple of Jesus Christ, but to also teach others how to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. It was imperative that RBC develop a culture and practice of disciple-making. Moreover, the declining age of the church members added a further urgency to passing on what has been learned so that RBC could continue to serve the local community. The biblical call to make disciples brings glory to God and edifies believers. Chapter 2 provides biblical support for disciple-making, while chapter 3 focuses on practical components of disciple-making. Chapter 4 details the development, elements, and timeline of the disciple-making project, while Chapter 5 provides statistical and theological analysis of the project.

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<sup>7</sup> Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus*, Building Health Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 13.

CHAPTER 2  
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS  
FOR DISCIPLE-MAKING

Christians are called to be disciples who make disciples. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, D. A. Carson writes, “It is binding on all Jesus’ disciples to make others what they themselves are—disciples of Christ.”<sup>1</sup> This chapter will examine four passages to give insight to the concept of making disciples. Matthew 28:16-20 teaches that Christ has called and empowered believers to go and make disciples of all nations, which includes baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 reminds believers that disciple-making includes teaching the things of God diligently to those God has placed in one’s life so they will lovingly obey God. Second Timothy 2:1-8 teaches that disciple-making, while difficult at times, is worth it as it is God’s ordained method to pass on the faith to future generations. Ephesians 4:1-12 reminds believers that the triune God has called pastors and leaders to equip the saints to be disciple-makers for the work of ministry and the building up of the body of Christ.

**Matthew 28:16-20**

Jesus’s words in Matthew 28:16-20 (commonly known as the Great Commission), maybe more than any other passage, define the mission of the people of God.<sup>2</sup> The Great Commission is the clearest passage on the command for all believers to

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<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 9, *Matthew and Mark*, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 666.

<sup>2</sup> Matt 28:16-20 reads,

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

“go and make disciples.” This passage, while understood by many Christians today as part of an ongoing mandate to go and make disciples, was not always viewed as such.<sup>3</sup> William Carey (1761-1834), the father of the modern missionary movement, argued strongly for an ongoing call to make disciples in *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792).<sup>4</sup> At the time of Carey’s ministry, some pastors saw little need for mission work, viewing the task as no longer binding on the church.<sup>5</sup> Carey was famously rebuked by many, including a minister named John Ryland. Ryland told Carey, “Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do without your aid or mine.”<sup>6</sup> Thankfully, Carey was undeterred, and evangelicals today see the call in Matthew 28 as a mandate for modern times. Even still, some compartmentalize the text to be only about evangelism. While evangelism is a part of disciple-making (one cannot be a disciple without being saved by the gospel message), Matthew 28:16-20 goes beyond that. An exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20 shows that Jesus has called and empowered believers to go and make disciples of all nations, which includes baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded.

### **Called and Empowered**

The narrative begins after Jesus’s death and resurrection. Christ appeared to the women at the tomb and told them to have his disciples meet him in Galilee (Matt 28:10).

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baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

<sup>3</sup> Michael A. G. Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality* (Darlington, England: Evangelical, 2007), 1.

<sup>4</sup> William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester: Ann Ireland, 1792), accessed March 27, 2023, <https://www.wmcarey.edu/carey/enquiry/anenquiry.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Haykin, *The God Who Draws Near*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel L Akin, *10 Who Changed the World* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 2.

The disciples go to the mountain to meet Jesus. There the text says that “when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted” (Matt 28:17). Commentators are divided on who the “some” in this text is referring to. Carson believes the “some” here is a reference to disciples outside the Eleven. He believes it is unlikely that it is the Eleven who doubted because Jesus had already appeared to them at other times.<sup>7</sup> Others, like New Testament scholar R. T. France believe that “some” is a reference to the Eleven, who are trying to process this new situation.<sup>8</sup> Jesus calling the disciples to such a public space indicates there were probably many more than just the Eleven gathered there. Still, the fact that Matthew mentions only the Eleven and adds the comment that some doubted indicates that some of the Eleven actually did doubt.

The word translated “doubt” here, *ἐδίστασαν*, refers more to hesitation than intellectual disbelief.<sup>9</sup> Much had changed for the disciples in the time since Jesus was arrested. Their ideas of what the work of Christ on earth would look like suddenly changed when Christ was betrayed, tried, and crucified. Now before them stood a resurrected Christ, once dead now alive, with all power and majesty. It is natural the disciples would feel conflicted at this moment. They were obedient to the call of Christ to the mountain and they were worshipful in his presence, yet they were still unsure of what the events of the crucifixion and resurrection fully meant.<sup>10</sup>

Aware of this, Christ spoke the powerful declaration that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt 28:18). Carson notes that the word “all”

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<sup>7</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 664.

<sup>8</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 1112.

<sup>9</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 663.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew*, in *The Expository Commentary*, vol. 8, *Matthew-Luke*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr, and Jay Sklar (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 442.

ties the entire passage together: “All authority, all nations, all things, all the days.”<sup>11</sup> The fact that all authority has been given to Christ may appear a bit confusing to some. After all, throughout the Gospel of Matthew Jesus shows authority on many occasions, whether referring to himself as Lord (7:21), teaching with authority (7:28-29), or healing and casting out demons (8:14-17). So, what can it mean that authority has been given now?

There appears to be a connection between the authority of Jesus given here and his work of redemption.<sup>12</sup> There was a time in his humanity where Jesus appeared limited in his authority. For example, Jesus was limited by suffering death on a cross. However, in Matthew 28 he has been vindicated by the Father in such a way that his authority cannot be denied. Paul affirms this in Philippians 2:5-11:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

While Christ had authority prior to the ending of the Gospel of Matthew, in his death and resurrection his full authority is revealed. In this power, this vindicated power, disciples are to go forth and make disciples. While the disciples had doubts and were hesitant, Jesus reminded them that he is the one who sends and empowers his disciples. In disciple-making, the power is not in the discipler. If it were, then there would be no chance of success. But because God is at work, the task of disciple-making can be done.

### **Make Disciples by Going, Baptizing, and Teaching**

In examining verses 19-20 it is important to note that the only verb in the imperative form is the verb *μαθητεύσατε*, translated as “make disciples.” Pastor John

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<sup>11</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 665.

<sup>12</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 665.

MacArthur writes in his commentary on this passage that

*mathēteuō* (make disciples) is the main verb and the central command of verses 19-20, which form the closing sentence of Matthew's gospel. The root meaning of the term refers to believing and learning. Jesus was not referring simply to believers or simply to learners, or He would have used other words. *Mathēteuō* carries a beautiful combination of meanings. In this context it relates to those who place their trust in Jesus Christ and follow Him in lives of continual learning and obedience.<sup>13</sup>

Carson also argues in his commentary that while the command was originally given to the Eleven (and possibly the others that were initially there), in this passage the Eleven are “paradigms for all disciples.”<sup>14</sup> It is binding today on all of Christ's disciples to make disciples.<sup>15</sup> Making disciples is accomplished by going, baptizing, and teaching.<sup>16</sup>

In making disciples, one must go. There is debate on how to understand the word “go” in verse 19. The only imperative in the passage is to “make disciples.” Some believe that “go” should be understood more like “as we go,” indicating that disciple-making is to occur only where we are and that there is no call to go. Making disciples as we go is the primary focus.<sup>17</sup> While we should make disciples where we are, Carson points out that the call to make disciples of all nations necessitates the need to actually go beyond where we are.<sup>18</sup> The Great Commission does not rule out missions work at all, but rather implies it.

The call to baptize in verse 19 is the call to baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Craig Blomberg, long tenured professor at Denver Seminary, believes that this is one of the most explicit texts in all of Scripture detailing

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<sup>13</sup> John F. MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1989) 340.

<sup>14</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 666.

<sup>15</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 666.

<sup>16</sup> Doriani, *Matthew*, 442.

<sup>17</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 432.

<sup>18</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 666.

the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>19</sup> It is worth noting that there are not three baptisms (one for each name) nor are there three names. Instead, the one name underscores the unity of the Godhead. Baptism is a public declaration of one's allegiance to God. It is also the way one declares oneself connected with other believers. In Acts 2, Peter preached at Pentecost, prompting the crowd to ask what they should do:

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (vv. 38-41)

Baptism is the outward sign that one is connected to Christ and to the body of Christ.<sup>20</sup> It is the first step in obedience for a new believer.

That initial step of obedience is not the end but the beginning. In Matthew 28, Jesus tells the disciples to teach others "to observe all that I have commanded you" (v. 20). As previously noted, the "all" here should be understood in connection to the "all" power Jesus claims in verse 18. Just as his power is absolute, the obedience of disciples of Christ should be absolute as well.<sup>21</sup> Disciples are to teach other disciples all the truths of God so that they can obey them. This teaching must go beyond corporate worship to other spaces and times in life, to make sure the whole counsel of God is taught. In keeping the Word of God, disciples show allegiance to God. In the Gospel of John, Jesus promised that one part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit would be to bring to his disciples' remembrance the words of Jesus. In that same passage Jesus asserted what he would reaffirm in the Great Commission; namely, that his disciples must be characterized by keeping his words—words which ultimately came from God the Father:

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<sup>19</sup> Blomberg, *Matthew*, 432.

<sup>20</sup> Bobby Jamieson, *Why Should I Be Baptized?*, Church Questions (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 21.

<sup>21</sup> MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 340.

Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” (John 14:23-26)

## **Not Alone**

Jesus concludes the Great Commission by promising to always be with his followers (Matt 29:20). This powerful phrase bookends the Gospel of Matthew well, as the book begins with the declaration that Christ is *Immanuel*, which means, God with us (Matt 1:23). Although Jesus physically ascended shortly after these words (Acts 1:9), his promised presence with his people is a reality through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised in John 14 that he will abide in those who keep his word. Paul tells the church at Ephesus that Christ resides in their hearts through faith (Eph 3:17). This underscores that fact that God is ultimately at work in the heart of one being discipled. The emphasis on God’s Word and God’s presence reminds that it is his power that causes spiritual growth. There should be an emphasis on prayer in disciple-making so that God’s power is accessed. Carson points out that the encouragement to ask, seek, and find are meant to encourage the believer who is overwhelmed in spiritual growth to turn to God. Jesus did not leave the believers with an impossible task. He instead offered them his strength through prayer.<sup>22</sup> Disciples can have confidence in the task of disciple-making because they are not alone. Matthew 28:16-20 teaches that all believers are to be disciples who make disciples.

## **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

Deuteronomy 6:4 begins what is known as the *Shema*, which means “to hear.” This passage, along with the subsequent instructions, served as a crucial passage for the Israelites during the Old Testament period. While the focus in the passage is on family

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<sup>22</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 222.

teaching within the Old Covenant, it shows New Covenant believers that God has always prioritized teaching others the things of God. Believers can understand its first application to parents of the Old Covenant and also understand that it provides some common themes of passing on faith that are supported in the New Testament and are relevant for New Covenant believers today. An exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 shows that disciple-making includes teaching the things of God diligently to those whom God has placed in people's lives so they lovingly obey God.

### **Supremacy of God**

Deuteronomy 6 occurs at an important time in the history of the people of Israel. The people have been rescued by the hand of God from their affliction in Egypt. They have been given the law of God and have been chosen to be his people. The book of Deuteronomy comes after years of the people neglecting the will and Word of God and focuses on the call of the people to renew their covenant with God. The Decalogue of Exodus 20 is repeated in Deuteronomy 5. Commentator John Currid points out that the calling in Deuteronomy 6:4 to monotheism connects this passage with the first commandment in the Decalogue to have no other gods.<sup>23</sup>

The focus of this section is Deuteronomy 6:4-9, which reads,

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

A foundational truth of this passage is found in verse 4: "The Lord is one." This emphasizes the dedication to monotheism for God's people. Christopher Wright explains in his commentary on the book of Deuteronomy that the priority is not as much on

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<sup>23</sup> John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Deuteronomy*, Evangelical Press Study Commentary (Darlington, England: Evangelical, 2006), 162.

denying the existence of other deities but on making it clear the God of Israel is supreme.<sup>24</sup> Contrary spiritual forces are not denied, but instead the Israelites are called to reject allegiance to them and to give total allegiance to God. There is no room for polytheism and divided obedience. It is Yahweh and him alone that they are to love and follow. From a New Covenant perspective, in disciple-making it is important to today teach who God is and what he has done. It also important to teach disciples that one cannot be divided in allegiance to God.<sup>25</sup> In the New Testament, Jesus reiterated this principle that one cannot serve two masters (Matt 6:24).

### **Love through Obedience**

An emphasis in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is on loving God through obedience. The connection with the Decalogue must be remembered, as Moses is tying the importance of keeping commands with the call to love God. Biblical scholar J. A. Thompson points out that Israel's obedience was not merely to be a form of legalism, but to be based on a relationship of love.<sup>26</sup> Disciple-makers need to teach that following God's commands is not a way to earn God's love. In the first giving of the Decalogue in Exodus 20, the passage begins with a reminder that God has freed the people from the bondage of Egypt (Exod 20:1-2). God's people have never related to God on the basis of merit, but always by grace. As the New Testament teaches, "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Both Old and New Testaments make clear, however, that a relationship of love is not inconsistent with following a moral law. In the proceeding chapter, God tells the

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<sup>24</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 96.

<sup>25</sup> August H. Konkel, *Deuteronomy*, in *The Expository Commentary*, vol. 2, *Deuteronomy-Ruth*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 111.

<sup>26</sup> J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (London: InterVarsity, 1979), 138.

people that he gives his love to those who love him and keep his commandments (Deut 5:10). Jesus repeats this concept when he states, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Disciples demonstrate their love for God in obedience to God. Loving submission in Deuteronomy 6 is grounded in the specific words of the Decalogue, but it can reasonably be more broadly applied to the entirety of the commands of God.<sup>27</sup> Christian love results in obedience, and a lack of obedience suggests a lack of Christian love.

The total obedience of the disciple is reiterated with the call to love God “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (v. 5). This grouping of heart, soul, and mind is repeated at least eight times in the book of Deuteronomy. It symbolizes the totality of the commitment of the disciple to God.<sup>28</sup> God is not to be one of many options; he is to have the place of preeminence. The term heart (לֵב) is used in the Bible to describe the place of will or volition.<sup>29</sup> It also contains the idea of emotion, but it is more than the modern Western idea of the heart as mainly the seat of the emotions. The Bible teaches that emotions are not to rule our lives but our will and intellect are to control our emotions.<sup>30</sup> The Hebrew word for *soul* (נֶפֶשׁ) has the idea of the inner self. Psalm 103 uses the word *soul* in parallel with the phrase “all my inmost being.”<sup>31</sup> Again, the idea of comprehensiveness is present in calling the disciple to love with heart and soul. The call to love God with all of one’s might (כָּל־כֹּחְךָ) can be translated “with all your very-muchness.”<sup>32</sup> The instruction is clear: the disciple is to be

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<sup>27</sup> Michael A. Grisanti, *Deuteronomy*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, *Numbers-Ruth*, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 557.

<sup>28</sup> Grisanti, *Deuteronomy*, 556.

<sup>29</sup> Grisanti, *Deuteronomy*, 556.

<sup>30</sup> Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 138.

<sup>31</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 99.

<sup>32</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 99.

totally committed to loving and obeying God in every area of life.

## **Diligence**

Deuteronomy 6 reminds believers that disciple-making, whatever the context, must be done with intentionality and diligence. In this passage, the things of God are being taught “when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut 6:7). While the immediate context is parents being diligent in teaching their own children, this concept of intentionality and diligence is applicable to other New Covenant spheres of disciple-making. Disciple-makers should take the task of making disciples seriously and look to incorporate disciple-making into every area of life.<sup>33</sup> There is no compartmentalization of faith to only designated times of specific religious duties or ceremonies. Instead, faith should be brought to bear on everyday life. Disciple-making sees every part of life in relation to who God is and obedience to him. Writing on Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Pastor Mark Dever describes disciple-making as “transmitting the knowledge of God and his Word through every moment of life.”<sup>34</sup>

God commands the believer to take his words and “bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes” (Deut 6:8). Many Jews attempted to literally fulfill this passage by wearing small leather boxes containing this Scripture on both their left arms and on their foreheads.<sup>35</sup> Although Christians understand this as an Old Covenant practice not required of New Covenant believers, they do receive it as a metaphor for internalizing the Word of God.<sup>36</sup> Wright notes that there is a progression in

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<sup>33</sup> Konkel, *Deuteronomy*, 111.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus*, Building Health Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 28.

<sup>35</sup> Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 139.

<sup>36</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 100.

the text in the application of the Word of God. First, the Word is applied to the individual, then to the family, and then to the community at large. Faith is not merely for personal consumption—believers are called to take the faith out to others. Not every believer can *go* and take the gospel to the nations, but every believer can make disciples as he or she is *going*. The call to disciple those close by means that the homemaker, the businessman, and retiree all have opportunities to disciple others. Christians reading Deuteronomy through the lens of the redemption that is in Christ can apply many of the same principles to making disciples today. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 reminds believers that disciple-making includes teaching the things of God diligently to those God has placed in one's life so that they lovingly obey God as well.

### **Second Timothy 2:1-8**

In 2 Timothy 1-8, the apostle Paul writes to his younger protégé, Timothy:

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel.

Paul serves as an example of one who learned directly from Christ (Gal 1:11-12) and passed on that teaching to others. An exegesis of 2 Timothy 2:1-8 shows that disciple-making, while difficult at times, is worth the effort as it is God's ordained method to pass on the faith to future generations.

Paul was a committed disciple-maker. His most significant disciple was Timothy. Paul met Timothy while traveling through Lystra and, after spending time with him and hearing of his good reputation, desired to take him along with him on his missionary work (Acts 16:2-3). The text of Scripture makes little mention of Timothy's father, other than that his father was a Gentile, implying that possibly he had passed away

by the time Paul met Timothy.<sup>37</sup> Thus, in many ways Paul served as a father figure to Timothy. Paul even tells the Philippian church that he views Timothy as a son (Phil 2:22). Here in 2 Timothy 2, he explicitly calls Timothy his child (v. 1). The book of 2 Timothy is generally agreed upon by evangelical scholars to be the last of Paul's canonical writings. Paul notes in the letter that he believes his time of departure is at hand, which scholar Philip Towner sees as a reference to Paul's impending death.<sup>38</sup> Paul is writing with the purpose of seeing Timothy continue on in the faith after he is gone.

### **Pass the Torch**

While this text was written to a pastor involved in pastoral ministry, it is broadly the task of all believers to spread the gospel.<sup>39</sup> In 2 Timothy 1:5 Paul reminds Timothy that Timothy first heard the gospel from his mother and his grandmother. Paul has also invested much in the life of Timothy. He tells Timothy to pass on “what you heard from me in the presence of many witnesses” (2 Tim 2:2). As Paul nears the end of his life, he calls Timothy to be faithful to continue the legacy of faith.<sup>40</sup>

What Paul taught to Timothy, Timothy is then to pass on to other faithful men (2 Tim 2:2). Theologian Donald Guthrie points out that that the term *faithful* (πιστοῦς) indicates that believers are in view here.<sup>41</sup> As discussed with the Great Commission,

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<sup>37</sup> Acts 16:1-3 reads, “Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.”

<sup>38</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 611.

<sup>39</sup> Denny Burk, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, in *The Expository Commentary*, vol. 11, *Ephesians-Philemon*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 467.

<sup>40</sup> John Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996).

<sup>41</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 2nd ed. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1990), 506.

disciple-making is not just evangelism. Evangelism is a prerequisite, but disciple-making involves further teaching of believers. Guthrie also contrasts the faithfulness of these men with those Paul had previously warned Timothy about who follow after foolish myths (1 Tim 1:4). The teaching that Paul calls Timothy to in 2:1-2 differs from the preaching Timothy is called to in chapter 4. While preaching occurs as the church gathers, the teaching that Timothy is called to here in chapter 2 is of a more intimate and personal nature.<sup>42</sup>

The text of 2:1-2 clarifies that Timothy is not merely to teach these faithful men the truth for the sake of their own personal knowledge. He is to teach these men the truth in such a way that they will be able to pass it down. Each generation of disciples should be trained to pass on the teaching to the next generation. This has been the formula throughout the history of the church. Jesus had in his earthly ministry only twelve close disciples (including Judas). Yet, from this small group the Christian faith has expanded for two millennia. In a manner similar to that of his Savior Jesus with the Twelve, Paul invested in Timothy as a disciple. Timothy is called to guard the good deposit of his faith (2 Tim 1:14), guarding the faith so that it can be passed on to others who will pass it on to others. This stands in stark contrast to much of contemporary ministry which is often focused only on current numbers and filling the pews in the moment. It seems however that a better metric for ministry is not in the attendance figures of the moment, but how well the church is passing on the truth of the gospel to future generations of believers.

### **Difficulty in Disciple-Making**

Paul is clear in 2 Timothy 2 that making disciples is not an easy task. The

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<sup>42</sup> Tony Merida, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, Christ Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 162.

phrase “you then” that begins chapter 2 connects this passage with the end of chapter 1.<sup>43</sup> There, Paul recounts how Phygelus and Hermogenes had abandoned him. One of the challenges of disciple-making is that some disciples will turn away. Jesus himself had one of his twelve turn away from him. The work of disciple-making can be discouraging. It is important for disciples to know that if Paul and Jesus had disciples abandon them, modern Christians should not be surprised if disciples abandon modern disciple-makers. In fact, Paul follows up the call for Timothy to make disciples with the call to “share in suffering” (2 Tim 2:3). The task of disciple-making is of paramount importance: nothing could be more crucial than passing on the faith. The task however, has challenges. Paul dealt with such apostasy with the church at Galatia:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. (Gal 1:6-9).

As disciple-makers teach the gospel and train others, they must be aware of the vital nature of the task, while knowing that it will not be an easy one.

### **Encouragement to Endure**

Paul begins his letter greeting Timothy in “grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (2 Tim 1:2). Throughout chapter 1 he writes to encourage Timothy to remain steadfast in the faith (vv. 6-7), in contrast to others who have turned away from Paul, and by extension, away from Christ as well (v. 15). In chapter 2, Paul tells Timothy to “be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus (v. 1). This focus on Christ encourages disciple-makers to continue in the faith.

One helpful point to remember in disciple-making is to look for individuals

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<sup>43</sup> Burk, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 467.

who are faithful and teachable.<sup>44</sup> Paul calls Timothy to find men who are *faithful* (πιστοῖς). The word indicates that in discipling others one should look for those willing to commit to growth. Paul encourages Timothy to invest in those who want to grow. Many times in his ministry Jesus had the opportunity to lower the standards of discipleship to meet the desires of those around him. Yet, time and again, Jesus called out fickle loyalty and commitment. Luke 9:57-62 reads,

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Not only should disciples be faithful, but they should be teachable with an ability to also teach others (2 Tim 2:3). Every disciple must be teachable. If a disciple is not willing to learn, then the disciple-maker cannot force the disciple to grow. If one will not listen, often it is best to move on to a disciple who will (Matt 10:14). The disciple should be teachable and also have a willingness to teach others.<sup>45</sup> The gospel should produce in believers a desire to tell others what God has done.<sup>46</sup> Disciples are to receive knowledge and pass it on.

Paul uses illustrations of different types of individuals to teach about the importance of dedication in disciple-making: a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer (2 Tim 2:4-6). Each example involves an individual under tremendous pressure that endures for a season. Each example makes sacrifices for the work to get done. Disciple-making means

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<sup>44</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, *2 Timothy*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, *Ephesians-Philemon*, ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 574.

<sup>45</sup> Every disciple should teach, but not all are gifted to teach in the same way. One should be faithful to pass on the faith with the natural and spiritual gifts God has given.

<sup>46</sup> See Luke 8:26-39 where a man was healed of a demon possession. His first instinct was to go with Christ wherever he was going. When Christ instead called him to go home and testify to what had happened, he joyfully went and proclaimed the restorative power of God.

inconveniences; it means giving up personal time to invest in others. It requires emotional vulnerability as others are invested in.

Paul uses the example of a soldier as one who does not get “entangled in civilian pursuits” (2 Tim 2:4). Many things can distract from the task of disciple-making. In some ways, the current generation has a greater challenge than ever before because of the onslaught of technology that serves to divert and dull. The soldier, however, is not preoccupied by things that are unessential to his mission. He has a singular focus: to follow the commands of the one over him.<sup>47</sup> The soldier does not work a 9 to 5 job, but instead is a soldier 24/7.<sup>48</sup> Disciple-makers recognize that the call from God is to be faithful at all times.

Another illustration used in this passage is that of the athlete (2 Tim 2:5). The athlete had to compete according to the rules. In his commentary on this passage, author Warren Wiersbe explains,

In the Greek games in particular, the judges were most careful about enforcing the rules. Each competitor had to be a citizen of his nation, with a good reputation. In his preparation for the event, he had to follow specific standards. If an athlete was found defective in any matter, he was disqualified from competing. If, after he had competed and won, he was found to have broken some rule, he then lost his crown.<sup>49</sup>

In the case of 2 Timothy 2, the rule is a reference to a willingness to suffer.<sup>50</sup> To be a disciple-maker means a willingness to endure oneself and the willingness to let disciples know that to follow Christ can and will be costly. Later in 2 Timothy Paul writes, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (4:7). In Hebrews 12, the believer is called to run the race of faith with endurance (v. 2). Disciple-

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<sup>47</sup> Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 493.

<sup>48</sup> John MacArthur, *2 Timothy, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 43-44.

<sup>49</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2001), 776.

<sup>50</sup> Burk, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 468.

making takes focus and endurance.

The third analogy Paul uses in this passage is that of a farmer (2 Tim 2:6). The farmer is characterized as “hard-working.” Making disciples is hard work. Paul never minimizes the difficult nature of disciple-making, but he does remind Timothy that there is a reward for those who do the work.<sup>51</sup> He describes the farmer working that he might “have the first share of the crops.” There is great joy in disciple-making. While it is challenging, being used by God to see another believer walk in obedience is gratifying. Disciple-makers work, but they work as ones anticipating a bountiful harvest.

Paul never minimizes the challenge that disciple-making is, but he graciously reminds believers why it is important. The call in verse 8 to “remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead” serves as motivation for the task. If Christ is risen, then nothing is more important than making disciples. If Christ is risen, then he is worthy of all allegiance and obedience.<sup>52</sup> While the task is challenging, God has called his people to be disciple-makers and pass the faith down to the next generation.

### **Ephesians 4:1-12**

The last passage to be examined in this chapter is from the book of Ephesians. Theologian John Stott calls the book a “concise, yet comprehensive, summary of the Christian good news and its implications.”<sup>53</sup> An exegesis of Ephesians 4:1-12 shows that the triune God has called pastors and leaders to equip the saints to be disciple-makers for the work of ministry and the building up of the body of Christ.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Köstenberger, *2 Timothy*, 575.

<sup>52</sup> Burk, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 468.

<sup>53</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1979), 15.

<sup>54</sup> Eph 4:1-12 reads,

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just

## Triune God

The word “therefore” at the beginning of chapter 4 signifies a transition from doctrinal to the practical section of the letter.<sup>55</sup> Paul, in chains, urges the church at Ephesus to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (Eph 4.1) This is a reminder that all believers are called by God and are recipients of his grace.<sup>56</sup> Paul describes how this life should appear in verse 2: “With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.” Paul uses those nouns to build to his central point, which is a desire for unity in the church (v. 3).<sup>57</sup> For many, unity in a church might sound like an impossible dream, but Paul grounds the expectation for unity in the fact that God is a triune God. In verses 4-6 Paul gives one of the clearest descriptions of the Trinity in all of the Bible: “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Here Paul states that because God is one, the church should also be one. Each member of the Trinity promotes unity. In fact, the presentation of each member of the Godhead pairs well with the discussion of the diversity within the “one body” (v. 4). In addition to calling attention to each member of the Trinity, Paul also stresses their unity. Commentator Frank Thielman notes that there are seven uses of the word “one” in 4:4-

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as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

<sup>55</sup> R. Albert Mohler, ed., *NASB, The Grace and Truth Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022), 1669.

<sup>56</sup> Benjamin L. Merkle, *Ephesians*, in *The Expository Commentary*, vol. 11, *Ephesians-Philemon*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 69.

<sup>57</sup> Merkle, *Ephesians*, 68.

6.<sup>58</sup> The number seven indicates completion and underscores the total unity of God. Denial of the oneness of God diminishes the awareness of churches to have unity of vision and purpose. Denial of the trinitarian nature of God diminishes the ability of the church to understand that different members have different roles.<sup>59</sup>

Paul makes it clear that while all believers should be united, that does not mean everyone has the same gifts. God gives each member of the body different grace gifts that are to be used for the good of the church (Eph 4:7). In Romans, Paul warns believers,

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. (12:3-6a)

Paul emphasizes that God gives different gifts to the members of the church (Eph 4:7), and believers can trust that the Lord will do what is right.<sup>60</sup> It is not for believers to fight over various gifts. Paul reprimands the church at Corinth for despising certain gifts and reminds them that every gift is essential in the church of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 12:21-26).

### **Different Gifts**

This passage gives significant insight into the role the local church has in the task of making disciples. Other passages examined thus far have included the entire body of believers in the disciple-making, but this passage gives clear delineation into what leaders in the church are to do. In 4:11, Paul lists five groups in the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. This list is similar to a list in 1 Corinthians

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<sup>58</sup> Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 255.

<sup>59</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 256,

<sup>60</sup> John MacArthur, *Ephesians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 137.

12:28 where Paul lists apostles, prophets, and teachers. Paul mentions those three to indicate that God appointed the apostles first, then prophets, then teachers.<sup>61</sup>

The apostles (*ἀποστόλους*) served as the New Testament equivalent of the prophets of the Old Testament.<sup>62</sup> Apostles are first in both lists because they wrote Scripture and saw the risen Christ.<sup>63</sup> Paul seems to indicate he is the last of the apostles in 1 Corinthians 15:8-9. The second group, the prophets (*προφήτας*), is not the same group found in the Old Testament. Thielman argues instead that they are a group who would offer a prophetic word at particular times.<sup>64</sup> The third group, evangelists (*εὐαγγελιστάς*), may refer to those who traveled to preach the gospel (Philip might be an example). The last two groups identified are the shepherds (*ποιμένας*) and teachers (*διδασκάλους*). The Greek construction seems to indicate these are the same office.<sup>65</sup> This last grouping of shepherd/teacher office differs from the other offices as this role is more localized in a particular congregation. There is debate on whether all five of these groups exist today. It seems most likely, for example, that there are no apostles and prophets today.<sup>66</sup> The importance here is that God has gifted individuals in different ways for service in the church.

### **Equipping and Building**

An important role for the pastors of a church is to equip the saints “for the work of ministry” (v. 12). Many churches have a model where the pastor is hired to do

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<sup>61</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 346.

<sup>62</sup> See 2 Pet 3:2 where the prophecies of the Old Testament by the prophets and the commands through the apostles are linked.

<sup>63</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 273.

<sup>64</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 274.

<sup>65</sup> MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 145.

<sup>66</sup> MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 142.

most of the ministry of the church. Often these ministers serve as almost a hired hand for whatever needs the congregation has. While a pastor is to do “the work of ministry” (specifically the preaching of the Word), he cannot do, and is not expected by Scripture to do, most of the work of the ministry in a church. The pastor must equip others to do the work. Pastors, like other members of the church, should make personal disciple-making a priority. Pastors are to be an example of disciple-making to all members of the church. It is impractical for a pastor to disciple every member of a church, but he should disciple some of them and work to equip all members to be disciple-makers. As noted in Paul’s admonition to Timothy, the task involves teaching so that those taught can teach others. This should produce a culture of disciple-making where every member is being intentionally equipped for the work of ministry.

The goal of the saints being equipped for service is “the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12).<sup>67</sup> Believers are to care for one another, to be invested in one another. In a unified church each member is looking to build up his or her brother or sister. Pastor John MacArthur writes, “The maturation of the church is tied to learning of obedience to the holy revelation of Scripture.”<sup>68</sup> As believers are built up, the church is built up. The focus of building up the saints is on spiritual growth, not numerical growth. At the same time, practically, it is essential for all members to do the work of building up the saints so that churches can grow. Most churches in the United States are fortunate if they have one full-time employee as a pastor. One pastor cannot be the only one building up the church if numerical growth is to happen. All believers must use their God-given gifts and, with the help and leading of pastors and leaders, do the work of ministry and build up the body of Christ.

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<sup>67</sup> Merkle, *Ephesians*, 75.

<sup>68</sup> MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 156.

## **Conclusion**

It is impossible to include every text on disciple-making in a single chapter. The four passages selected—Matthew 28:16-20, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 2 Timothy 2:1-8, and Ephesians 4:1-12—showed the biblical mandate to make disciples and also described what disciple-making is. God has called and empowered believers to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe the things of God so that they will lovingly obey God and that the faith is passed to future generations, for the equipping of the saints and the building up of the body of Christ.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO DISCIPLE-MAKING

In the previous chapter, biblical passages were examined regarding the importance of disciple-making. This chapter will look at four essential topics that need to be taught in disciple-making: the gospel and evangelism, Scripture, prayer, and church membership. While other elements could and should be taught, these four are primary. First, without an understanding of the gospel, one cannot be a disciple. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4, “Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (vv. 3-4). The gospel needs to penetrate the hearts of unbelievers, such that they come to know God through Christ. The writer of Hebrews reminds that “without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (11:6). To be a disciple, one must first know and believe the gospel.

Having been born again through the gospel, the disciple is to follow God. But how can the disciple know what God wants from him or her? The way the disciple will know God’s will is through God’s Word. Jesus commands disciples in the Great Commission to teach others what God has commanded (Matt 28:19-20). The commands of God are found in his Word, and the ability to read and understand them must be taught. As God speaks through his Word, disciples respond to him in prayer. Prayer is an important way to maintain connection with God (1 Pet 5:7). Finally, a disciple of Christ should be part of a community. The fellowship of believers is an essential environment

for growing as disciples, as “they exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb 3:13). While not exhaustive, the gospel, Scripture, prayer, and church membership are foundational elements that need to be taught in disciple-making.

### **The Gospel and Evangelism**

The most fundamental aspect of being a disciple is understanding and embracing the gospel. Paul tells the church at Corinth that the gospel is the most fundamental message of Christianity. “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved (1 Cor 15:1-2a). Paul tells the church at Rome that the gospel is the power of God for salvation (Rom 1:16). To be a Christian one must receive the gospel. The Christian life involves believing the gospel, living out the gospel, and sharing the gospel.

### **Defining the Gospel**

To be a Christian is to embrace the gospel. But what exactly is the gospel? Mark Dever explains the gospel this way:

So what is the gospel? The good news is that the one and only God, who is holy, made us in his image to know him. But we sinned and cut ourselves off from him. In his great love, God became a man in Jesus, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross, thus fulfilling the law himself, and taking on himself the punishments for the sins of all those who would ever turn and trust in him. He rose again from the dead, showing that God accepted Christ’s sacrifice and that God’s wrath against us had been exhausted. He ascended and presented his completed work to his heavenly Father. He now sends his Spirit to call us through this message to repent of our sins and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. If we repent of our sins and trust in Christ we are born again into a new life, an eternal life with God.<sup>1</sup>

At its core, the gospel message is penal substitution.<sup>2</sup> “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). The gospel message is about what Christ does in the place of sinners. Salvation

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 98.

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 719.

is not something that can be earned; it is received as a gift of grace (Eph 2:8-9). The gospel is not primarily a call to do; it is an announcement of what has been done.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Sovereignty of God**

Often the presentation of the gospel is focused on man and what he does. However, in the Bible the main actor in the gospel is not man, but God. The Bible makes it clear that God is the one who is sovereign over all of creation.<sup>4</sup> Addressing the subject of God's sovereignty in salvation Paul writes, "What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy" (Rom 9:14-16). In other words, Paul sees God as not only having the full right to save only those He desires to save, but it is because God desires to save certain individuals that anyone at all is saved.

The truth of God's sovereignty is important for several reasons. First, it shows that there is no place for boasting in the kingdom of God. If salvation were merely the product of human choice, then one could claim superiority to others based on decision making prowess. Paul tells the church at Ephesus it is "by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph 2:8-9). There is a natural temptation in fallen man to put down others and elevate self. The truth that the gospel is a gift from God destroys that logic.

A second reason it is important to recognize God's sovereignty in salvation is that it prioritizes prayer. If God is the one who saves, then it is important to call on Him to save. If God is not the one who saves but merely allows people to choose him, then there

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Horton, *The Gospel Commission: Recovering God's Strategy for Making Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 21.

<sup>4</sup> J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 15.

is no value in petitioning on behalf of individuals.<sup>5</sup> It also gives the Christian hope for lost individuals because God can save them. A view of the sovereignty of God will drive a passion for intercessory prayer.

A third reason that acknowledging the sovereignty of God in salvation is important is that provides assurance for the believer. If the gospel is merely a human decision, then there is no basis for assurance that one will not change his or her mind later. Instead, Jesus promises to hold his sheep until the end. Speaking of believers, he says, “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (John 10:29). While most evangelicals hold that one cannot lose his or her salvation, the best argument that salvation cannot be lost is that salvation is more than something one decides for oneself; it is itself a gift of God.

A fourth important reason to acknowledge the sovereignty of God is that it provides confidence in the full gospel message. A view of evangelism that sees the primary goal in evangelism as convincing people to follow Christ will be tempted to downplay crucial aspects of the message. Speaking of hell and judgment are not popular in modern Western culture. One might consider softening these truths to get a positive reaction.<sup>6</sup> In fact, a presentation that does not end with a conversion might be viewed as a failure on the part of the witness.

A view of the sovereignty of God will reassure the disciple that God uses the true message of the gospel, as offensive as it is, to save people. In fact, this is the very plan of God. “For since in the wisdom of God,” Paul writes, “the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe” (1 Cor 1:21). The message is not the problem, the human heart is. Jesus illustrates this powerfully with the story of the sower who spread the seed on different

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<sup>5</sup> Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 37.

<sup>6</sup> Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 32.

types of ground and yet only one area produced a crop. The issue is not the seed, that is, the message of the gospel, the issue is the ground, the human heart (Matt 13:1-23). God uses his gospel to produce his people.

### **The Agency of Man**

Yet at the same time it is clear that man makes a real decision for Christ. Man has a responsibility to hear and respond to the gospel. Jesus teaches this in John 3:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (vv. 16-18)

A person must call on the Lord to be saved (Rom 10:13). There is no contradiction here with the sovereignty of God. Theologian J. I. Packer describes this as an antimony, or as only an apparent contradiction.<sup>7</sup> While man might struggle to reconcile these ideas, God has no problem with both truths.

The fact that man is responsible has several applications. First, there is an urgency to the gospel.<sup>8</sup> The gospel is not merely a set of interesting facts but a call to lost men to be saved. Trust in the sovereignty of God should not produce a coolness in evangelism. Instead, the beauty and necessity of the message should drive its furtherment. Believers should also recognize that God ordains both the means and the ends of salvation. Second, the fact that man is responsible reminds one of the wickedness of humanity. As Romans 3 explains, man does not seek God. God is not blamed for man's rejection; man himself does not want to see the truth of God (Rom 1:18).

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<sup>7</sup> Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 26.

<sup>8</sup> Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 38.

## **The A to Z of Christianity<sup>9</sup>**

Lastly, on the topic of the gospel, it is important to understand that while evangelism is the first effect of the gospel, it is not the last. Growth in Christ never goes beyond the gospel, it goes deeper into the gospel.<sup>10</sup> Many Christians shift their mindset in sanctification to a works-based model of salvation. But grace is the engine for both justification *and* sanctification, and it is the engine that carries the believer on to glory. While there is a place for spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading and prayer, those disciplines are to flow out of an understanding of the gospel. Dallas Willard writes, “Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Scripture**

In *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Biblical Spirituality professor Donald Whitney states, “No Spiritual Discipline is more important than the intake of God’s Word.”<sup>12</sup> While it would be difficult to develop and defend a ranking of most of the biblical spiritual disciplines, the logic of primacy here is solid. It is through Scripture that one understands all of the other disciplines. Without the Word one would not understand the principles of worship or stewardship. Scripture unlocks the other practices that should define the Christian.

### **The Nature of the Word**

What does it mean for the Bible to be God’s Word? This question is of vital importance because the answer one gives will determine how one approaches its usage.

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<sup>9</sup> J. D. Greear, *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 21.

<sup>10</sup> Greear, *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary*, 21.

<sup>11</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2006), 76.

<sup>12</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 22.

While Christians understand that the Bible is the Word of God, the understanding of what that means has been debated among scholars and churches. Theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968) argued that the Bible merely contains the Word of God. The *1963 Baptist Faith and Message* allowed for this view when it stated that the “Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God’s revelation of Himself to man.”<sup>13</sup> One of the very important changes the Southern Baptist Convention made to their statement of faith in 2000 was to clarify this particular line.<sup>14</sup> Evangelicals understand that the Bible is not merely a record of the revelation of God to man, but it is itself the revelation of God to man. The Apostles Paul tells Timothy that “all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 2:16).

Pastor James Emery White describes Scripture as inspiration that is both verbal and plenary.<sup>15</sup> The fact that Scripture is verbally inspired means the actual words are inspired and not merely the ideas that can be formulated from them. That Scripture has plenary (from the Latin meaning full) inspiration means that every part of the Scripture is inspired by God. “Knowing this first of all,” Peter writes, “that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20-21). Peter’s point is that the words of Scripture are not merely reflective of man’s thoughts of God, but are the actual perfect words that God willed for the human authors of Scripture to write.

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<sup>13</sup> Southern Baptist Convention, “Comparison Chart,” accessed February 28, 2022, <https://bfm.sbc.net/comparison-chart/>.

<sup>14</sup> In the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 the Bible is no longer described as “the record of God’s revelation of Himself” but as “God’s revelation of Himself.” Southern Baptist Convention, “Comparison Chart.”

<sup>15</sup> James Emery White, “Inspiration and Authority of Scripture,” in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation: A Complete Library of Tools and Resources*, ed. David S. Dockery, Kenneth A. Matthews, and Robert Sloan (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1999), 23.

It is essential that Scripture be a vital part of the life of the disciple. While God speaks in other means such as through general revelation in creation (Rom 1) and through the conscience of the individual (Rom 2), those are inferior to the revelation that comes through Scripture for at least a couple of reasons. First, by themselves creation and conscience cannot answer the big questions of life. While one can look at creation and recognize that a divine being made everything that exists, that information alone cannot tell a person the attributes of God, such as his holiness and his grace. It also cannot tell man that his greatest problem is sin and how that problem can be remedied through the person and work of Christ—that information comes through the Word of God. A second reason these other sources are inferior is that they are less clear. One might “feel” that God is leading one to do such and such thing, but can that type of reasoning be trusted? How can one know if that is a genuine leading of God or one’s own desires (or worse)? The Bible is not only God’s Word, it is sufficient for answering life’s most important issues. Paul tells Timothy that the Word is inspired and profitable so “that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:17).

Tied to the idea of the Bible being God’s revelation is the inerrancy of the Bible. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy defines *inerrant* as signifying the “quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions.”<sup>16</sup> It is important the disciple believes that the Bible is completely accurate. Some attempt to hold to what are viewed as essential truths of the Bible, such as the resurrection of Jesus, while jettisoning other teachings in the area of history. Separating the Bible into inspired and non-inspired sections makes the reader the arbiter of truth rather than God. This idea of questioning the truth of God’s words goes all the way back to the garden, and Satan’s question to Eve: “Did God actually say” (Gen 3:1). A Bible that has errors cannot be trusted to be a reliable guide for

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<sup>16</sup> The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” accessed February 28, 2022, [https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI\\_1.pdf](https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdf).

a disciple. In disciple-making it can be useful to consult extra resources that can speak to the reliability of the Bible. Books on apologetics as well as works that focus on harmonization of apparent discrepancies can help reassure the believer of the truth in the Scripture. It also must be noted that while the Bible itself is inerrant, interpretations are not. The Bible has been criticized over the centuries for being wrong but in actuality the errors have not been with the Word but the interpretation of the Word. It is essential to be careful in the interpretation of the Scripture, a point that will be examined shortly.

Finally, it is important to not only understand that the Bible is inerrant, but to understand that it is sufficient. The sufficiency of Scripture means that all the things necessary for salvation and for Christian life are found in Scripture.<sup>17</sup> This means that there is no additional revelation to be added to the canon of Scripture. The sixty-six books in the Bible are exactly what God ordained for his people to have.<sup>18</sup> The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture also implies that the role of the Holy Spirit in the current age is not to provide new revelation but to illuminate existing revelation. David prays in the Psalms “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law” (Ps 119:18). The Spirit has the ministry of clarifying the truth that has already been revealed. It is not that the Spirit is providing new revelation, it is that he opens the eyes of the heart to see truth in the sufficient Word of God.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, many Christians who would affirm the inerrancy of Scripture deny by their actions the sufficiency of Scripture. Language such as “God told me,” without a Scripture reference attached, suggests that Scripture is

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<sup>17</sup> Matthew Barrett, *God’s Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture*, The Five Solas Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 334.

<sup>18</sup> For information on how the books were determined, see Timothy Paul Jones, *How We Got the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Roy B. Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 42.

not sufficient. Disciple-makers have an important responsibility to impress on disciples that unless the Bible is referenced it is dangerous to say God has said one thing or another.<sup>20</sup>

### **Methods of Bible Intake**

Whitney identifies five methods of Bible intake: hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating.<sup>21</sup> Hearing God's Word will be addressed in a later section on the church. Maybe the most basic of the other methods is to read the Bible. Reading the Bible starts with a desire to encounter God in his Word. Professor Tremper Longman compares the discipline of reading God's Word to that of children eating vegetables: it is necessary for growth but often disciples resist it.<sup>22</sup> Time must be set aside for Bible reading. In a world with so many competing entertainment venues and responsibilities, the disciple-maker must insist on the importance of spending time in God's Word. Again, it is through the Word that God speaks.

The third method of Bible intake that Whitney identifies is studying.<sup>23</sup> It is essential that disciples understand what the Word of God means. Paul tells Timothy to present himself "to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). Properly interpreting the Bible will take work. Some challenges to interpreting the Bible include distance of time from the events, cultural distance from the biblical world, geographical distance from the locations

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<sup>20</sup> Some would object to this idea with the response that God can speak through means other than the Scripture. Even if that is granted, it is clear that those other ways (such as intuition or feelings) are prone to incredible subjectivism. If God's Word is a reliable objective standard, then it is certainly preferable to a subjective standard that borders more on mysticism than biblical Christianity.

<sup>21</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 21-78.

<sup>22</sup> Tremper Longman, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997), 24.

<sup>23</sup> While there is an important part the community of faith plays in biblical interpretation, this section will focus on the individual with the communal aspect addressed in the section on the church.

described, and the different languages used in the Bible.<sup>24</sup> While these challenges are daunting, a great deal of scholarly work has been done to assist in completing the task. While not every disciple can attend a seminary class in hermeneutics, basic Bible study is something every disciple can and should do.

Professors Richard Fuhr and Andreas Köstenberger argue for a method of interpretation called the inductive method.<sup>25</sup> This common technique involves three steps: observation, interpretation, and application. Observation is the initial stage and functions as a data gathering activity. One will observe the text and make notes regarding issues such as genre and structure. The second stage is interpretation. The emphasis here is on putting the pieces that were gathered in observation together. Fuhr identifies three Cs of interpretation: context, correlation, and consultation.<sup>26</sup> To assist in this work tools such as word studies and commentaries may be utilized. The final stage is that of application. Here, the disciple takes the meaning and applies it to the modern setting. It is important that application is the final step in the journey as it is necessary to first understand what the Bible meant then before one can know how to apply the timeless message to today. The Bible reader should always read with an eye toward application.<sup>27</sup> Disciple-making is not merely the successful transmission of information; it also involves learning how to live by that information. In the Great Commission Jesus instructs those gathered to teach others to observe what he had taught (Matt 28:20). Many disciples attend churches where they receive biblical messages and lessons but have never been taught to read the Bible for themselves. While evangelicals reject the Roman Catholic priestly class who holds

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<sup>24</sup> William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 53.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Alan Fuhr Jr. and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Inductive Bible Study* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 38.

<sup>26</sup> Fuhr and Köstenberger, *Inductive Bible Study*, 40.

<sup>27</sup> Fuhr and Köstenberger, *Inductive Bible Study*, 40-41.

the keys to interpretation, practically, many pastors and church leaders do the same thing. While there is a place for teachers of doctrine in the church, the ability to understand meaning should not be relegated to only a certain class.

The fourth method of Bible intake that Whitney identifies is that of memorization.<sup>28</sup> David is a model of this when he says to God, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Ps 119:11). Disciples are told to allow the word of Christ to dwell within them (Col 3:16). This is only possible if believers remember the words of the Bible. Memorization is a discipline that takes much work and practice. Pastor Andrew Davis has written a helpful guide to this task in his short booklet “An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture.”<sup>29</sup> He argues for memorizing books of the Bible over memorizing independent verses. This keeps the focus on the fact that all of Scripture is God’s Word, not just some parts. It also protects the disciple from taking verses out of context.

The fifth and final method of Bible intake is meditation. Not to be confused with Eastern mysticism, biblical meditation is not the emptying of the mind but the filling of the mind with the things of God.<sup>30</sup> It is the logical conclusion of the other methods of intake, as it allows the disciple to think on the things of God after reading and study is complete. God tells Joshua before he leads the people of Israel into the promised land that he should take care to meditate on the Word of God day and night (Josh 1:8). Meditation is designed to take a broader passage that one might read or study and focus on a verse or even a word out of the larger passage. Different ways to meditate include emphasizing

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<sup>28</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 39.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Davis, “An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture,” accessed February 28, 2022, <https://twojourneys.org/all-books/an-approach-to-extended-memorization-of-scripture/>.

<sup>30</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 46.

different words as one reads,<sup>31</sup> rewriting the text in one's own words,<sup>32</sup> and thinking of an illustration of the text.<sup>33</sup> Whitney argues for the importance in this step with an illustration of a tea bag. Reading and studying the Word are analogous to dipping a tea bag in hot water but meditation is more like submerging the entire bag in water.<sup>34</sup> Many disciples struggle to recall and apply what they read and study because they do not sit with the truth after they finish encountering it. Meditation is an essential part of disciple-making as it is a way that the Word of God travels with the disciple throughout the entire day.

### **The Purpose of the Scripture**

As Bible intake occurs, it is important to remember the focus of the Scripture. Luke ends his gospel account with a helpful hermeneutical perspective. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus encounters two men distraught over his death. Jesus takes the opportunity to teach them “in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). The focus of the Bible is the person and work of Jesus Christ. Teaching disciples how to read or memorize the Bible is a failure if the focus of Bible intake is not Jesus Christ.

### **Prayer**

Prayer, at its most basic form, is about relationship.<sup>35</sup> It is a communication between the Creator and his creatures.<sup>36</sup> God speaks through his Word and his people reply to God in prayer. The connection between God and the believer should be as natural

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<sup>31</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 56.

<sup>32</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 57.

<sup>33</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 58.

<sup>34</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 47.

<sup>35</sup> Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 231.

<sup>36</sup> David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 94.

as any intimate relationship between individuals. God invites believers to call out to Him in prayer. Paul instructs the church at Ephesus to pray “at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication” (Eph 6:18). Jesus consistently modeled the importance of prayer in his own life on earth (Luke 5:16).

The disciples longed for Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11). Christians sense that they should pray yet many struggle with what prayer is and how to pray. One of the challenges of prayer is that it can often feel as though nothing is occurring.<sup>37</sup> For all its challenges, prayer is an indispensable part of being a disciple. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. One of the most memorable parables in the Bible involves a widow continuing to petition an unjust man for justice (Luke 18:1-14). The persistence of the woman wins over even an immoral man, with the clear point being that if persistent petitioning can work with one who is unrighteous, then how much more does God desire to hear and work through the prayers of his people.

### **Defining Prayer**

Gary Millar defines prayer as “calling on God to come through on his promise.”<sup>38</sup> Calling God is more than just mentioning his name. The name of God in the Bible is more than a name; it compasses who he is. His entire character is bound up in his name. Calling on God means understanding something of who he is. It is not a mere shout into the dark but is a call to Him based on an understanding of who God is. That is why it is appropriate to place Bible intake before prayer in the logical order of spiritual disciplines. One cannot call on whom one does not know. Prayer is more than talking to God, it is responding to Him.<sup>39</sup> The other element of Millar’s definition is calling on God to come

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<sup>37</sup> Paul E. Miller, *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2017), 3.

<sup>38</sup> Gary Millar, *Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 27.

<sup>39</sup> Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 94.

through on his promise. Prayer involves knowing God and praying consistently with the promises that belong to the believer in the gospel.<sup>40</sup> Because of the work of Christ, believers have access to God (Heb 10:19-22).

### **The Posture of Prayer**

“What is a Christian?”, J. I. Packer asks in his classic book *Knowing God*. “The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as Father.”<sup>41</sup> It is important to note that when Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, he has them begin with the phrase, “Our Father.” Jesus Himself models prayer to his Father throughout his earthly ministry. As believers who have been adopted into the family of God, prayer involves seeing God as Father. Understanding God as Father should produce a sense of helplessness and need. The gospel reminds believers that adoption into the family of God is not based on merit but on grace.<sup>42</sup> Christians should have a posture of humility in prayer as they approach their heavenly Father.

One of the challenges for believers to experience fruitful prayer is the inability to be honest and transparent before God. The analogy of a father and children is important. Just as children ask and petition with no illusion that needs can be provided other ways, so too believers should develop a sense of dependency that causes them to seek out the Lord in prayer. In many ways, this dependency should be as natural as breathing.<sup>43</sup> Prayer should be the natural response of a heart that senses its need for God.

However, as with a human father, prayer cannot be merely about asking for things. Any parent/child relationship that only was the child asking for things would be

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<sup>40</sup> John Onwuchekwa, *Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church*, Building Healthy Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 35.

<sup>41</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 200.

<sup>42</sup> Miller, *A Praying Life*, 43.

<sup>43</sup> Onwuchekwa, *Prayer*, 17.

unhealthy. Having God as a Father is recognizing the need for God for things, but it is more than that as well. To have God as a Father is to be in relationship with Him. Prayer provides an opportunity for the believer to seek the Lord and to express the feelings and affections of the heart. As God speaks to his people through the Word, God's people are to respond in prayer.

### **The Scope of Prayer**

What should be prayed for? In a sense, everything should be prayed for. Though, since the Bible is the basis of understanding prayer, the Bible should show what to pray about. Naturally, believers will pray for things that are important to them. While that is not inappropriate, disciples should be stretched in how they pray. In *Praying with Paul*, professor D. A. Carson examines the New Testament and identifies several prayer emphases of the apostle Paul. Generally, Carson notes that the emphasis in prayer should be on spiritual things.<sup>44</sup> Part of the reason disciples struggle in prayer is because they do not have an eternal perspective for their prayer life. For example, Carson explains that prayer should include praying that other believers are worthy of their calling.<sup>45</sup> Disciples should have a larger vision than personal comfort. There should be a desire in prayer for the power of God to accomplish great things. This is consistent with the Lord's Prayer and the admonition for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done (Matt 6:10).

### **Praying the Bible**

In *Praying the Bible*, Whitney outlines a helpful method on how to pray. Understanding that Christians will struggle to pray, but recognizing that for many the primary cause of the struggle is a monotonous repetition in their prayers, he calls

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<sup>44</sup> D. A. Carson, *Praying with Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 35.

<sup>45</sup> Carson, *Praying with Paul*, 36.

believers to pray the Bible.<sup>46</sup> This method involves selecting a particular passage of Scripture (he especially recommends the Psalms) and then reading through the passage slowly, stopping at each verse and praying about whatever is prompted by that verse. The focus here is not on interpretation, which he concedes will sometimes lead to praying about matters that are not actually the point of the passage. This activity does not have Bible reading as the goal but prayer as the goal; the Bible reading serves the goal of prayer in this case.<sup>47</sup> This will bring a freshness to prayer, for even though a person will likely pray about many of the same people and situations each day, the language of the prayers and petitions will be different as they are shaped by the passage that is used. Whitney encourages a systematic method that involves praying through the Psalms with a focus on five psalms each day.<sup>48</sup>

In *Habits of Grace*, David Mathis gives several pieces of advice on prayer. He argues it is good to have a set place to prayer, possibly a closet or another place where you can be private. Second, like Whitney, he recommends using the Bible to prompt prayer.<sup>49</sup> Third, he recommends the ACTS acronym: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication to guide the time. Fourth, he argues that in addition to sharing the desires of their hearts, Christians should seek to have their desires shaped.<sup>50</sup> Fifthly, he argues for the need to keep the time fresh by utilizing different techniques such as writing out prayers or fasting.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 27.

<sup>47</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 35.

<sup>48</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 51-53.

<sup>49</sup> Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 103.

<sup>50</sup> Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 104.

<sup>51</sup> Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 105.

## Imitation

Invariably, Christians learn how to pray by listening to other Christians. Whitney tells a humorous story of a church service where a five-year-old boy prayed in unison as his father prayed aloud. It was clear that the boy had heard the identical prayer so many times that he had memorized it himself.<sup>52</sup> Regardless of how aware of it one may be, the truth is Christians often pray much like others they have heard pray. Indeed, many Christians are intimidated to pray audibly because they have heard others pray and are convinced, they cannot pray in like manner.

Disciple-makers have two important responsibilities here. First, they need to assure disciples that they do not need to sound exactly like anyone else. God is interested in the specific prayers of each of his children. Still, people will learn from and emulate others. Because this is true, disciple-makers should provide quality models of prayer for the disciple, which can be accomplished in several ways. One important model of prayer is learning to pray according to the Lord's Prayer. While the Lord's Prayer found in the Gospels can be recited verbatim, it is best to recognize the prayer as forming a basis and prompt for a more improvised prayer. Reformer Martin Luther, in his book *A Simple Way to Pray*, recommends using the petitions of the Lord's Prayer as a guide for prayer. For example, when addressing the first petition of "Hallowed be your name," Luther recommends praying words similar to "Yes, Lord God, dear Father, hallowed be your name, both in us and throughout the whole world. . . . Convert those who are still to be converted that they with us and we with them may hallow and praise your name, both with true and pure doctrine and with a good and holy life."<sup>53</sup> Luther recognizes that the strength of the Lord's Prayer is not that it is a collection of words that should be repeated without thought, but that it helps the one praying remain focused by following the

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<sup>52</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 16.

<sup>53</sup> Martin Luther, *Little Prayer Book, 1522 and A Simple Way to Pray, 1535*, ed. Mary Jane Haemig and Eric Lund, The Annotated Luther Study ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 259-60.

prompts. Another helpful model is the collection of prayers found in the New Testament, particularly the prayers of Paul. The disciple-maker should teach disciples how to pray the prayers of the New Testament, in the same manner as described in the comments about Whitney's *Praying the Bible*.<sup>54</sup> Disciple-makers can also provide resources that contain prayers of the saints post New Testament. A particularly helpful resource for this is *The Valley of Vision*, which is a collection of Puritan prayers.<sup>55</sup> While the language might seem a bit strange to the modern ear, it is an incredible reserve of God-honoring prayer.

A second way disciple-makers can help is to intentionally pray aloud with the disciple. Praying audibly will let the disciple hear the prayers of another, but the purpose of learning how to pray will be helpful.<sup>56</sup> Demonstrating a wide scope of prayer, with the elements of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and petition will remind the disciple that prayer is more than merely petition. Also, offering prayers of petition that go beyond only physical personal needs to cover kingdom needs will help the disciple learn to pray with a more God-centered view.

### **Prayer Lists**

Many churches provide their members with prayer lists of different needs. Pastor Kent Hughes has a daily list that includes family, staff, new believers, and missions that he goes through every day. He also has four other lists that he tries to go through once a week. He underscores the fact that without a prayer list, it is likely that he would fail to follow through on his promise to pray as needs arise.<sup>57</sup> Disciples should think about what

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<sup>54</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 56-60.

<sup>55</sup> Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975).

<sup>56</sup> Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 115.

<sup>57</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 102.

the needs are all around them. Having a prayer list is a helpful way to make sure one has a systematic way to lift concerns. Rotating large lists will also help manage the time as prayer lists can grow very large. Carson advocates using publications such as *Operation World* to pray for missions work in other countries.<sup>58</sup> The church directory can also be a helpful aid as members commit to praying systematically for each member of his or her congregation.

### **Church Membership**

The last area that will be examined in this chapter is church membership. While this issue does not get the emphasis in evangelicalism that the gospel, the Bible, and prayer do, it is a vital aspect of growing as a disciple. This issue is particularly neglected in the West as individualism and self-determination are enthroned in the culture. Increasingly, evangelical churches are minimizing or even eliminating the very concept of church membership. Despite this movement, the Scripture is clear on the importance of the church as a community of faith. While the other three areas examined can be practiced both alone and with others, this last component necessitates a formal connection with other believers. Far too many Christians have developed an individualistic mindset when it comes to their faith, and this has had significant ramifications. Some results include minimizing the significance of the Lord's Supper as an observance for the gathered church, frequent non-attendance at corporate worship, making major life decisions without any counsel and wisdom from the church, or moving to a new area without any advance consideration on where they will attend church.<sup>59</sup> Possibly the most neglected aspect of otherwise faithful disciple-making is prioritizing and celebrating the local church.

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<sup>58</sup> Carson, *Praying with Paul*, 9.

<sup>59</sup> Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus, Building Healthy Churches* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 23.

## **The Importance of Community**

From the very beginning of humanity God has established the importance of community. This emphasis on relationship is intrinsic in the very idea of God himself. God exists in three persons, each person in perfect union with the others. As man is made in the image of God, it is logical that man would also be made to be in union with other persons. Indeed, in the garden after creating man, God said that it was not good for Adam to be alone (Gen 2:18). Here the first of three God-ordained institutions was formed. Marriage and family are meant to be the basic building blocks of a society. They are also to be a place of real intimacy and connection. The second institution formed by God is government. Paul says in Romans 13 that governments have been ordained by God to bring order and stability. The presence of governments suggests the gathering of a group of people in one place under a set of laws. Man was not designed to live on a remote island away from everyone else but was instead designed to be among a group of people. The third institution ordained by God is the church. As God worked through the nation/state of Israel in the Old Testament, he similarly works through the church in the New Testament.

In *When the Church Was a Family*, Joseph Hellerman argues that in many ways Western society has lost the focus on the importance of the group. He points out that language like “personal Savior” is not in the Bible at all.<sup>60</sup> Instead, the overwhelming emphasis is on the communal nature of Christ as savior. He argues that in the New Testament world in which the church was born, the group took priority over the individual.<sup>61</sup> Understanding the church as a family underscores that the church is more than a service club or extracurricular activity. Disciples are called to be part of the family of God—the church.

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<sup>60</sup> Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 7.

<sup>61</sup> Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 32.

## **What Is the Church?**

The word for *church* in the New Testament is the Greek word *ekklesia*. It has the meaning of assembly.<sup>62</sup> While the word *church* is used to describe both the entirety of Christianity and local congregations, its predominant use in the New Testament is to describe the local church.<sup>63</sup> *Ekklesia* also has the connotations of gathering together. While many online churches are growing in popularity, the meaning of the word *ekklesia* seems to suggest that these types of churches are lacking something essential. For churches to be churches, by definition, they need to assemble.

## **Is Church Membership Biblical?**

In recent years there has been an increase in questioning the idea of whether church membership is biblical at all. These shifts in thinking seem to be a product of ever-increasing individualism in Western culture combined with a distrust of institutions. In fairness, critics of church membership might argue much of the growth in church membership in the twentieth century might have been the product of mid-century cultural trends to be part of organizations, and the church was simply a popular option on the list of possibilities. It is important to go the Scripture to see if church membership is biblical, but first, it is worth noting that the reformers placed a strong emphasis on church membership. They saw three distinguishing marks of a true church: preaching of the Word, proper observance of the sacraments, and church discipline.<sup>64</sup> Church discipline in particular calls attention to the issue of membership: how can one be removed if one is not first a member?

Several passages in the New Testament make formal church membership extremely plausible. First, passages that refer to church discipline make no sense if there

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<sup>62</sup> Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 15.

<sup>63</sup> Saucy, *The Church in God's Program*, 16.

<sup>64</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church, Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 101.

is no such thing as church membership. In Matthew 18 Jesus outlines the steps that should be taken for an individual in sin. While the church's goal is restoration, a person who continues to resist repentance faces an escalation of responses from other believers. The final step involves bringing the individual before the church (Matt 18:17). The church then is the one that pronounces judgment if one will not repent. But who is the church? Anyone who wandered into the assembly that day? It seems more likely that a local group of specific individuals (i.e., members) are the ones making the decision. This group of believers serves as an accountability system for believers. Without being a part of a church, a believer removes a significant accountability system from his or her life.<sup>65</sup>

A second key passage related to church membership is 1 Corinthians 5. Here Paul addresses a situation of blatant sexual sin in the church at Corinth. Paul's response to the situation is to instruct the church:

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.” (vv. 11-13)

Whitney points out that the idea of purging here cannot have the idea of not allowing the man to come to church at all for later in the letter Paul makes it clear that unbelievers are welcome to attend meetings. It must be then that the purging is a formal removal of the man from membership in the church. One cannot be formally disciplined by a church unless one is in a formal relationship with that church.<sup>66</sup>

A third key passage is Hebrews 13:17 where believers are told to obey their leaders as their leaders watch their souls and must give an account. The principle of leaders having a particular responsibility to those under them is taught throughout Scripture. Jesus warns of the destruction that will come to leaders who mislead others (Matt 18:6). Church

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<sup>65</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 50.

<sup>66</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church*, 44-45.

leaders have a significant responsibility, and it is right that they give account for those under their care. But who is it under their care? Anyone who even once attends the church on a Sunday being under their care seems too broad of a category. It seems more likely that leaders are responsible for particular individuals on the last day.

### **Why Join a Church?**

Mark Dever identifies several reasons why believers should join a Bible believing church in *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*.<sup>67</sup> The first reason he offers is to assure believers of their salvation.<sup>68</sup> Believers struggle with assurance of salvation and sometimes non-believers have a misplaced sense of assurance. A Christianity that does not exist in community loses an important tool in correcting both errors. The church is also a place Christians can be warned of error. Every believer will naturally have difficulty seeing some of his or her sins. Other believers can be a helpful way of bringing conviction and correction. A second reason to be part of a church is for evangelism.<sup>69</sup> While evangelism is something that is done by individual disciple-makers, there is more that can be done for the sake of the kingdom in community with others. Church members can pool their resources to host an event or to sponsor a missionary. Churches can also add credibility to their witness by doing good deeds locally and around the world.

A third reason to be part of a church is to edify the church.<sup>70</sup> Passages like Hebrews 10 speak to the importance of gathering to encourage one another. While men and women enter into salvation on their own, they also are then put into a family. Christians are to pray, read, and study the Bible on their own, but there is great value in doing this in community. Praying with other believers can be a helpful encouragement to

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<sup>67</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 162-71.

<sup>68</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 163.

<sup>69</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 164.

<sup>70</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 166.

those going through difficult times. Corporate worship services provide an important opportunity to hear the Scripture read aloud. Not only is the preaching of the Word edifying, but smaller, more intimate group times of study can help bring out different insights in passages being examined. A fourth reason Dever identifies is to glorify God.<sup>71</sup> God is gloried in having a people for his own possession and disciples should be a part of a local assembly that seeks to glorify God.

### **Being a Good Church Member**

If church membership is biblical then it is important to understand what it means to be a church member. The essence of church membership is committed love.<sup>72</sup> In joining a church a disciple is signaling that he or she is no longer only concerned with personal needs but wants to serve and meet the needs of others. Doing so requires several things. It first requires active attendance. Church membership rolls are often full of names of individuals who do not regularly attend. But how can one encourage and build up others unless one meets with others?

Second, a disciple should seek to be a church member who prioritizes others before self. Too many churches are known for being filled with disgruntled or angry members. Churches should be the last place for fights and grudges, yet unfortunately this often is not the case. This mentality ends up not only dishonoring the Lord but hurting the reputation of the church. Members should seek the best for others and be quick to reconcile and forgive when there are disagreements.<sup>73</sup> Church members should also hold each other accountable. Disciples need the insight of other disciples as they seek to grow in the Lord. Church members should live lives outside the church building that are consistent

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<sup>71</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 170.

<sup>72</sup> Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 67.

<sup>73</sup> Anyabwile, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?*, 69.

with what is taught in the church building. One major reason many unbelievers give for rejecting Christianity is that its adherents do not live out the teaching that they claim to follow. While church covenants are not emphasized as much today, they can be a helpful tool in reminding the assembly what they are called to be.<sup>74</sup> Lastly, church members should support the work of the church, which includes attending gatherings, but it also active participation and financial support. A corporate view of faith is not intuitive in Western culture so teaching this is an essential part of disciple-making.

### **Finding the Right Church**

In disciple-making it is important to teach what a biblical church looks like. As previously mentioned, the Reformers understood three marks of a biblical church: preaching of the Word, right administration of the ordinances, and church discipline.<sup>75</sup> Left on their own, many Christians will look for churches based on superficial reasoning such as music style preference or emotional connection. While those types of issues should not be ignored, they also should not be primary. Dever identifies expositional preaching as the most important mark, as the other marks tend to follow.<sup>76</sup> Whitney points out that one helpful way to know if a church is right is to interview the pastor.<sup>77</sup> Examining statements of faith and comparing them with Scripture is also an important task for disciples when considering a church.

### **Conclusion**

Disciple-makers have an important responsibility to teach others how to follow Christ. While not exhaustive, this includes at least an understanding of the gospel and

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<sup>74</sup> Anyabwile, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?*, 79.

<sup>75</sup> Clowney, *The Church*, 101.

<sup>76</sup> Dever, *Nine Marks*, 42.

<sup>77</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church*, 200. Whitney also provides questions to ask a pastor as well as guidelines on how and how not to ask them.

evangelism, Scripture, prayer, and church membership. Without understanding the gospel, one cannot be a disciple of Christ. Scripture and prayer are vital in disciple-making because those are the ways disciples hear from God and speak back to God. Church membership is important as well because in the fellowship of other believers disciples are encouraged, convicted, and spurred on to Christlikeness. For Ross Baptist Church to fulfill its mission “to make and develop passionate followers of Jesus Christ,” members need to learn about these four areas and learn how to teach them to others.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPING DISCIPLE-MAKERS

To help develop disciple-makers at Ross Baptist Church, I created and taught a curriculum on the subject. Included in this project was the development of a curriculum that was evaluated by an expert panel of local associational pastors, promotion of the project to the congregation, the development and administration of a pre-project Disciple-Making Assessment (DMA) designed to serve as a base of information on the feelings and confidence toward the subject of disciple-making, teaching of a disciple-making class over a period of eight weeks, administration of a post-project DMA for those who completed the course, and finally, an analysis of the pre- and post-project results.

#### **Curriculum Development**

Curriculum development began in the summer of 2022. I used previous work from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary classes as a basis for the structure of the course. I wanted to develop an eight-week course on disciple-making, making sure to emphasize four elements in the course. First, I wanted to clarify what it means to be a disciple. It is important for the members of Ross Baptist Church to understand that to be a Christian is to be a disciple, following Jesus in every area of life. Second, I wanted to explain that every Christian is to be a disciple who makes disciples. One of the hopes for the class was to show each participant that he or she is to do the work of disciple-making, and to not leave it up to the pastor or church leadership alone. Third, I wanted to teach on certain areas of the Christian life that are essential for the believer to clearly understand. For this, I selected the topics of evangelism and the gospel, Scripture reading and study, prayer, and membership and fellowship in the local church. While more topics could have

been covered, with only eight weeks I thought it was important to narrow down the topics to these four. Finally, I wanted to spend time giving examples of how disciple-making would look different in various contexts, whether discipling a fellow adult or leading children in family worship at home.

### **Curriculum Evaluation**

After the curriculum was completed, an expert panel of local pastors evaluated it. I provided them with a rubric to fill out and asked them for any and all feedback they could give. The group was overwhelmingly supportive of the curriculum I had written.

Table 1. Evaluation of the curriculum

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>				
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.				4
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.				4
<b>Scope</b>				
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.				4
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.				4
<b>Pedagogy</b>				
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.				4
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.				4
<b>Practicality</b>				
The curriculum clearly details how to make disciples.			1	3
At the end of the course, participants will be able to train others how to follow Christ.			1	3

Each pastor gave the scores that were required to move forward (a minimal score of 3, representing sufficiency on each section), and gave helpful feedback. One pastor pointed out that, at times, while the curriculum was clever, it sometimes felt a little too complicated for the target demographic. It was a good reminder that as a seminary student, the primary audience generally is not fellow seminary students. I went back and made some adjustments to simplify language and concepts to be more accessible for lay individuals. Another helpful item of feedback from another pastor was that my weakest

area was practicality. It was a good reminder to make sure to show how the concepts can work. One change in this area was that for the week on the gospel and evangelism, I spent a good amount of time walking through the Three Circles Evangelism strategy from the North American Mission Board. I also added homework assignments each week so that the students could implement the concepts learned over the next week.

### **Project Promotion**

I formally introduced the course on Sunday, September 18, 2022. I explained that the final aspect of my seminary journey was to implement a project in the area of disciple-making. I spent a few minutes sharing why this topic was so important to me and why I thought it was important for our church. I explained that the following week there would be a survey to gauge attitudes and practices of church members in the area of disciple-making. I would then teach an eight-week class beginning September 28 on the topic of disciple-making. I emphasized that while this class was part of the requirement for the degree program, the ultimate goal was that the class would benefit the church.

The reaction to my announcement was overwhelmingly positive. One reason for enthusiasm was that this meant relaunching of our Wednesday night meetings. Since COVID-19 began, we had not resumed Wednesday night meetings. I think many people were glad to have a mid-week time of gathering again, regardless of the structure. Second, some people were glad to not only have a church activity on Wednesday night, but to do something different and new. Our Wednesday night prayer service had steadily declined over the years, and there was excitement over the changed format. Finally, much of the enthusiasm came from a desire to help me in my academic journey. I am thankful for the support Ross Baptist Church has given me now for almost ten years, and it is not surprising that when I announced I needed their help to finish my degree, many were eager. All these factors led to much better attendance than the Wednesday nights prior to COVID-19, as well as bringing in individuals who had previously not attended on Wednesday nights.

## **Pre-Project Disciple-Making Survey**

To get a better understanding of how the members of Ross Baptist Church envisioned disciple-making, I created the DMA. The survey was administered right before the start of the worship service on Sunday, September 25. I received thirty-three surveys back. Unfortunately, five surveys were either missing an answer to at least one statement or had an illegible answer for at least one statement. Only statements 7, 10, and 11 were incomplete on more than one survey. Statements 7 and 10 asked participants about their actual experience in disciple-making and possibly were left blank because of being unsure about what disciple-making is. Statement 11 also had two blanks, as it seems two participants were unsure of what to think about the pastor's role in discipling each member of the church.

While I knew the actual class would be smaller than the group that filled out the survey on that Sunday morning, I wanted to give the survey to a larger group for a few reasons. First, it was important for me to have a sense of the larger church when it comes to disciple-making. Second, I was hopeful that the survey would spark interest in participating in the class. Third, I was hoping that even for those who did not take the class, the questions would perhaps convict some of their attitudes toward disciple-making.

To protect anonymity and to receive more truthful and honest answers, the DMA relied on participants providing an identification number instead of a name. Those filling out the survey were instructed to provide a four-digit number that they could remember but that not would not clearly identify them. I stressed that it was important for those filling out the survey to remember that number so it could be used later to compare results for the pre- and -post project surveys.

The DMA was divided into two parts. The first part was demographic information. I used multiple choice for this section. Thirteen participants were male, while twenty were female. The following table shows the ages of the participants.

Table 2. Ages of the participants

Age Range					
18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71+
3	4	2	8	7	9

Table 2 displays why disciple-making is so crucial for Ross Baptist Church. The three youngest categories are overshadowed by the three older categories. There are as many participants in the 71 and over category as in the combined category of 18-50. Not only is this age breakdown not a sustainable model for a church to survive, but it shows that what has been learned has not been passed down. This chart gave me further resolve to focus on how older individuals can contextualize the gospel to younger ones. Only adults participated in the survey, and young people (under age 18) could have helped the numbers look a bit better, though not enough to change the fact that the data shows the need for younger disciples.

The second half of the DMA focused on the participants' opinions on the importance and practice of disciple-making. For this section, I used a six-point Likert scale. I presented several statements and asked participants to rank how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement. I used a six-point scale to avoid participants picking a middle answer. Statements 11, 14, 17, 20, and 23 expected a negative score so the scale was reversed for those questions. Table 3 highlights the five highest scoring answers.

Table 3. Highest pre-project survey scores

Statement	Average
12. I know what the gospel is.	5.30
18. I know how to pray.	5.24
21. I know what the local church is.	5.03
5. I consider myself a disciple of Christ.	5.00
8. It is important for every believer to be discipled by another believer	5.00

The top three scores all had to do with personal knowledge and comfort with an area of the Christian life. Three of the four areas of the Christian life that I believed

needed to be highlighted in disciple-making were at the very top. Interestingly, the only item that was not—knowledge on how to study the Bible—ranked tenth, suggesting possible intimidation to actually knowing how to study the Bible personally compared to how to pray or knowing the gospel. The ability to practice the four aspects of disciple-making that were to be part of the class ranked low. The lack of confidence among participants in teaching aspects of disciple-making speaks to the fact that, while many in my church think they know how to do things for themselves, they are uncertain about how to share that with others.

Table 4 highlights the five lowest scoring answers. The four lowest scores were all in the area of needing help to teach others. This reiterated to me the importance of the project. While members might have some knowledge of disciplines such as Bible study and prayer, they lack confidence to pass on that ability to others. The response to statement 10 was in line with the response to the four lowest statements. Without a confidence in the ability to transfer information, it is not surprising that members have not been discipling others.

Table 4. Lowest pre-project survey scores

Statement	Average
14. I need help learning how to explain the Gospel to another person	2.24
17. I need help learning how to teach another person to study the Bible	2.73
23. I need help learning how to teach another person about the local church.	2.94
20. I need help learning how to teach another person how to pray.	3.18
10. I am currently discipling at least one individual.	3.30

Another important point is that five of the thirty-three individuals who filled out the survey indicated that to some degree they disagreed with the statement, “I want to disciple another believer.” This was honestly a heartbreaking number to see, for about 15 percent of those surveyed did not want to disciple another believer. This reassured me that I needed to spend at least one week making the case that believers are called to disciple

other believers. The results of the survey furthered my resolve that this was an important class to teach.

### **Teaching the Curriculum**

The class ran for eight consecutive Wednesday evenings, from September 28 to November 16, 2022. While the number of individuals ranged from week to week, we had more people than attended on Wednesday evenings before COVID. Twenty-nine people attended at least one class. Because I knew some would inevitably miss a week of class, I recorded each class and posted a video link on our website. Each class was viewed online at least once, which could be either because someone missed a class or wanted to go over the material again.

Each week I began by reading a psalm. Each psalm that I read was connected to Donald Whitney's "Psalm of the Day" method that was discussed in chapter 3 of this project.<sup>1</sup> I then led a prayer based on that psalm. I did this for two reasons. First, I wanted a way to start the class that would help focus on participants' thoughts and attention. Hearing God's Word felt like an appropriate way to do that. Second, I wanted a devotional aspect to the meetings. While much of the class time felt academic, I wanted to incorporate elements that reminded participants of who it is we worship and are ultimately here for. Third, I wanted an opportunity to show the group what praying through the Bible looks like. Though I did not reveal until week 5 that I was using this technique, I thought that having five weeks of modeling the practice was helpful when it came time to explain the technique.

I created a PowerPoint presentation for each lesson. That gave a helpful visual aid for the group, allowing me to highlight the most important elements of what I was discussing. Each week I provided the participants with a handout with the major points to be discussed. The outline had room to take notes for things they found particularly

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<sup>1</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 48-54.

relevant. The outline also had the weekly schedule so participants could have the focus for each week. I also provided the link on the paper the website where missed classes could be viewed.

### **Class 1**

The first class was on the topic of “What Is a Disciple.” After the devotional and prayer from a psalm, as well a brief introduction to the entire eight weeks, I wanted to engage the participants in their thoughts, so I had them write their definition of a *disciple*. After a few minutes I asked them to share their definitions as I wrote their answers on a white board. I began the class in this way for a couple of reasons. First, I wanted to know what they thought a disciple was. I was pleased with the answers, as they were consistent with what I was going to teach. Second, I wanted to establish that while there would be heavy lecture in the class, I did want interaction. Except for the Sunday school hour, all corporate gatherings of our church are focused on listening to a central figure. I wanted them to realize that this class would be different and that they should feel comfortable speaking up.

I then used the rest of the class to define what it means to be a disciple. I had several statements about what it means to be a disciple and included fill-in-the-blanks for the handout for each participant to follow along with. During the classes the fill-in-the-blank method was particularly helpful as some people never seemed to write anything other than the actual blanks that were needed. Along with each statement was at least one Scripture passage validating its inclusion in the list. My primary emphasis the first week was that to be a Christian is to be a disciple. I wanted to underscore that Christians are not merely those who have been saved, but they have been saved to follow Christ. This means a lifelong commitment to wanting to be more like Jesus. The homework for the first week was for participants to write out their personal definition of what it means to be a disciple. Providing homework was designed to accomplish two things. One, I wanted to stress the class-type function of the meeting. This class was to be different from other

gatherings and participants needed to understand that. Two, it was designed to give practical application to each lesson. The goal of this homework assignment was merely for participants to summarize in their own words the topic that had been discussed.

## **Class 2**

The second class focused on the biblical mandate for all Christians to make disciples. This week, as well as every subsequent week, began with a devotional word and prayer from a psalm, as well as a brief review of what was covered the previous week. The material for this week relied heavily on the biblical exposition I had done on four passages in chapter 2 of this project: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Matthew 28:16-20, 2 Timothy 2:1-8, and Ephesians 4:1-12. When looking at Deuteronomy 6, I stressed that families are the first place disciple-making should occur, a theme I would return to in week 8. I also emphasized that disciple-making does not always occur in the context of formal church gatherings but, like in Deuteronomy 6, during the rhythm of everyday life as well. I also emphasized that God has given parents this important role, even though most parents are not ordained ministers or have seminary training. I wanted to help participants understand that while knowledge is important (hence the class), their relational capital is more important than their expertise. Disciple-making is not only for the experts, but for every believer.

Next, I looked at the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Most participants were familiar with this passage, but many thought of the passage as primarily about evangelism. I focused on the fact that the call here is not merely to decisions but to make disciples. Included in that is the call to teach what Jesus taught. This task is for all believers. I pointed out that the grounding for this task is in the fact that Jesus has all authority and that he promises to be with us. I encouraged participants that in disciple-making they are not alone, but that Christ is with them.

The third passage was 2 Timothy 2:1-8. Here I focused on the fact that Paul learned from Christ, but then he passed on what he knew to Timothy. In a similar way,

Timothy learned from others and was to teach others so they could teach others. I made the point that personal disciple-making is God's ordained means to reach the next generation. Like many members, I am concerned about the age of the average congregant and the long-term future for the church. I showed the members of Ross Baptist Church that there is a hope for changing the trajectory of the congregation. I also showed that if what we had been doing was not passed down, then what we were doing before was not good enough. Churches can get nostalgic for the past, particularly when numbers or budgets were good. I emphasized that faithfulness is not primarily measured by the apparent immediate results, but down the line as the truth of God's Word is passed down.

The last passage examined was Ephesians 4:1-12. Here I spoke about the importance of disciple-making to the nature of the church. Disciple-making, while not merely a formal program of a church, such as a class gathering, should always be connected to a local church (a theme I would come back to in week 6). Pastors and leaders are to equip members to be disciple-makers. I corrected possible mistaken thinking that it is the pastors' and leaders' job to do all the disciple-making, and the rest of the church is passive in the task, with the possible exception of inviting people to church to see the "professionals."

I then turned to several possible objections to disciple-making. Among the objections covered were lack of knowledge, introverted personality tendencies, and not feeling the need to do it. Each objection was countered with truth on the vital importance of the task for each Christian. I then gave some ideas on the type of person they could disciple. For families with children, I mentioned children as a great place to start. I also encouraged men to disciple men and women to disciple women so inappropriate lines are not crossed. I ended the time with honest discussion of how difficult the task is, but with encouragement that in God's power they can do it. The homework assignment was for participants to identify three potential individuals they could disciple.

### **Class 3**

For classes 3-6, I went over four areas that need to be understood and taught to disciples. Class 3 covered the topic of the gospel and evangelism. I began by asking the participants to write their definition of the *gospel*. I again utilized the white board to collect definitions. I then spent about half of the hour defining and explaining the gospel. Of central importance was explaining the doctrine of penal substitution. I also looked at the two doctrines of God's sovereignty and man's agency, showing how both are biblical concepts and not in conflict. It was important that the participants understood how holding both of those truths is essential to not only biblical fidelity but to doing evangelism well.

It was also important—based on both the pre-project survey and the feedback from the expert panel—to spend time teaching how to do evangelism. I explained the gospel clearly because I did not want participants to see evangelism as a formulaic presentation. At the same time, it is helpful to have an organized, faithful way to present truth to another individual. For this, I used the Three Circles evangelism method produced by the NAMB. I had presented this method before, but it had been many years and several of participants had never seen it. After I went over how to use the method, I had participants break up into groups and practice using the presentation with each other. While I did not know how that would go, I was happy with the discussions I could hear going on. I wrapped up the week by noting that the gospel is not only for evangelism, but that the entirety of the Christian life is growing in understanding and appreciation for the gospel. The homework assignment for the week was for the participants to write out their own gospel presentation outline. They were free to just use the Three Circles method we had gone over. I wanted, though, to allow for someone to write out a different method they plan to primarily use. I know, for example, that a few people prefer to use the Romans Road method. I have no problem with that method, and I certainly do not want to discourage a method being used currently. I personally prefer the Three Circles method, and it was a chance for me to mention that it was a method created and used by the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. The goal of the homework

was simply to write out a method of evangelism, with the hope that writing it again would help commit the method to memory.

#### **Class 4**

Class 4 focused on Scripture. I covered the doctrines of both General and Special Revelation. I also explained *verbal plenary inspiration* to teach the doctrine of Scripture. I included a brief discussion on how the canon of Scripture came to be what we recognize today. The bulk of the time was on five methods of Bible intake, methods taken from Donald Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*.<sup>2</sup> Most of the time focused on the methods of studying and meditating. In discussing how to study the Bible, I taught that it is important to utilize three steps: observation, interpretation, and application. Time was spent on each of these steps, with a strong emphasis that one not skip to application but to work diligently through all three steps. I planned to give participants time to practice this method individually, but based on the relatively low scores for studying the Bible on the pre-survey, I decided instead to walk through a passage together, asking for their insights with the passage. The other major focus was on biblical meditation. I hoped this would encourage those who think they do not get much out of Bible reading. I stressed that while some participants need to read more Scripture (or even to start reading the Bible daily), for many participants the key is to not merely read more, but to think and dwell more on what they have read so that is retained, and that God can use it to accomplish his purpose within them. Homework for this week was to use one of the methods of biblical meditation and to practice on a passage.

#### **Class 5**

Class 5 covered the subject of prayer. I began with a brief overview on the topic of prayer. Of the four topics covered during weeks 3-6, this was the one I believed I

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<sup>2</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 21-78.

needed to define the least. Instead, most of the time concerned Whitney’s method of praying the Bible. Consistent with his method, I emphasized that praying the Bible is a way to not say “the same old things about the same old things.”<sup>3</sup> I showed how I had been using this method for several weeks without them being fully aware I was doing it. I explained the benefits to this method, and recommended a smartphone app that could help them. An important point I stressed was that praying the Bible is different from studying the Bible. In the latter, the right meaning of the text is of utmost importance. In praying the Bible, it is not. I was concerned that this would cause confusion and even cause some to not want to try the method, so I tried to drive this distinction home. I also allowed time for participants to try the method. I gave them ten minutes to do this on their own and afterwards we discussed their experiences. I ended the class by talking about other helpful aids in praying, such as using prayer lists and having a dedicated time and place where one would not be interrupted. The homework assignment for the week was to pray through a psalm.

## **Class 6**

Class 6 focused on fellowship. Originally, I had titled this week “Church Membership,” but feedback from the expert panel caused me to retitle the topic. I also wanted to emphasize what real biblical fellowship is in contrast to merely socializing. I used this class to teach on the importance of the local church, heavily using materials from both Mark Dever’s *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*<sup>4</sup> and Donald Whitney’s *Spiritual Disciplines Within the Church*.<sup>5</sup> Pre-project surveys suggested participants had a relatively comfortable level of understanding of the local church. I wanted to build on

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<sup>3</sup> Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 155-205.

<sup>5</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 15-30, 43-57.

that confidence as well as emphasize what makes attending church so critical. Of all the topics covered between weeks 3-6, this was probably the topic that has become the most unclear over the last couple of years. The COVID-19 outbreak resulted in many no longer attending church in person, initially possibly out of fear but in many cases out of laziness or complacency. I wanted to help participants see that life in the church is essential to being a healthy Christian. I also emphasized the need for church membership, as it seems the concept is less popular today, particularly among younger individuals. The homework assignment for the week was to write three reasons the participant would give to a person about the importance of being part of a local church.

### **Class 7**

Class 7 was on the topic of contextualization. Having outlined what a disciple is, the biblical call to make disciples, and covering four necessary areas about disciple-making, I devoted the last two weeks to practical application of the previously covered concepts. In covering contextualization, I gave some real-world insights into how to disciple different types of people. First, I explained that contextualization is not (necessarily) compromise. When the message is changed to make people happy with the message, that is sinful compromise. However, I wanted participants to know that sometimes the way things are presented changes depending on not only our current context but on the one we are attempting to reach. One area of contextualization I discussed was how to talk to individuals of different ages. In particular, as the pre-project survey showed and I knew based on the age of the church, older adults need to be equipped to talk with younger individuals. I also emphasized being respectful of different cultures, as well as the need to pursue relationships before pursuing prospects.

### **Class 8**

The final week focused on a particular area of contextualization, family worship, as well as a discussion of the entire course. The topic of family worship was included for

three reasons. First, it seemed like an appropriate connection to the earlier discussion in week 2 of Deuteronomy 6. Second, the pre-project survey seemed to indicate that children were not following their parents in continuing the faith. While some children have moved away, I know that many younger generations do not attend church the way their parents and grandparents do. Third, as a father of young children, I am attempting to lead in family worship and I believe it is vital for parents, particularly fathers, to do the same. The biblical background for the topic was examined, and external resources were discussed and recommended. This was the shortest teaching time because I allowed time for questions and for the post-survey to be completed. There were no questions, so I moved into allowing the participants to complete a post-survey. The post-survey was the exact same as the pre-survey DMA, with the exception that participants were asked to identify if they had either attended or watched all eight sessions. For anonymity, participants provided the same identification code that they provided on the pre-survey. Participants were thanked for their time and dismissed after a closing prayer.

### **Conclusion**

The implementation of this ministry project on disciple-making with the membership of Ross Baptist Church was a worthwhile endeavor. Not only does the statistical analysis speak to its value, but anecdotal conversations in the weeks since have affirmed that the class was necessary and helpful. Administering the survey to the larger congregation clearly showed that this area had been neglected for far too long. The evaluation rubric was helpful in getting feedback on how to improve the curriculum. The class was well attended, and it has encouraged me to develop more thematic classes in the future for Wednesday nights. The final goal used a *t*-test that compared the pre- and post-project survey results of those who attended the classes. The goal was met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a statistical difference between pre- and post-project survey scores.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

In this final chapter I will evaluate the ministry project. I will first assess the project's purpose. Second, I will assess its goals. Third, I will look at both its strengths and weaknesses. Fourth, I will mention what I would do differently. Finally, I will provide both theological and personal reflections for the project.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of the project was to develop a disciple-making program for Ross Baptist Church. Southern Baptists hold the Great Commission in Matthew 28 as central to their mission. That mission, while it does include evangelism, goes beyond evangelism to intentionally discipling others. Christians are called to teach others to observe what Christ has commanded. To not take disciple-making seriously is to be disobedient to the Word of God. Other passages (discussed in chap. 2) such as Deuteronomy 6, 2 Timothy 2, and Ephesians 4 teach the importance of passing down what has been learned.

For too long this task was neglected at Ross Baptist Church. Disciple-making was seen as a program, and not as a lifestyle. This resulted in a church that has increasingly grown older with too few young adults involved in the life of the church. As seen in the Disciple-Making Assessment (DMA) data, too few church members have taken on this responsibility. Of course, one can only teach what one knows; therefore, it is essential that members be trained to disciple others.

Ross Baptist Church is in a struggling location, both economically and numerically. Individuals are not migrating to the area for work and now most church members commute in from out of the area, resulting in less connection to the immediate

area and community around the church. To continue to survive, disciple-making must occur. Often churches chase the latest fad in church growth. What RBC and other churches need to do however is to rediscover the time-tested method that Jesus gave to his people: making disciples who make disciples.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

The project goals were created to serve the purpose of the project. The project had three goals: (1) assess the understanding of disciple-making among members of Ross Baptist Church; (2) develop a training curriculum for disciple-making; and (3) equipping members of Ross Baptist Church through an eight-week curriculum.

#### **Goal 1: Assess Understanding**

I created the DMA to evaluate the disciple-making attitudes and habits of the members of Ross Baptist Church. The results were incredibly helpful for me in understanding the spiritual status of the church. It was created for the project, but doing similar type surveys will be helpful in the future. Pastors generally have a good sense of the spiritual maturity of their members, but providing an anonymous survey does offer information that the pastor would otherwise not have. It also creates an opportunity for those taking part in the survey to think on the topics. Making the survey available to those who would not take that class presented greater insight than if only those who took the class completed the survey.

Ross Baptist Church is a small church, so I set a goal of 30 people to complete the survey. This goal was partially met. I was pleased that 33 people filled out the survey. Unfortunately, several surveys were incomplete or had one or two illegible answers. I received only 28 completed surveys so I would consider this goal partially met. I provided only one opportunity for the survey to be completed, before the Sunday morning service on September 25, 2022. I did have a couple of individuals request surveys for people not in attendance, and I received two back that evening, which I included in the 33 received. I

wanted the survey to be completed before the service in a large group because I was concerned that if I dropped them off in Sunday school classes they would be discussed and I would not get the results of each individual person but more of a group response. Trying to do it all in one week limited the number of results but I was trying to balance the number of responses with the integrity of the survey.

## **Goal 2: Develop a Training Curriculum**

The second goal was to develop a training curriculum for disciple-making. I was prepared for this task by my work in chapters 2 and 3. I wanted the first week to serve as an introduction to the course, and an opportunity to start with the basics of what it means to even be a disciple. Chapter 2 in particular became the source for my material for week 2. In chapter 2, I exegeted four different passages on the nature of disciple-making. It was important that participants saw the biblical basis for both what a disciple is and the call to make disciples. In particular, Matthew 28 and the call to make disciples was important. As the most familiar passage the class looked at, it was important for me to stress that Christians are not only to evangelize, but also to teach others all that Christ has commanded.

The four topics for weeks 3-6 came from my work in chapter 3. As I was working through that chapter, I wanted to narrow the focus to what was absolutely necessary to teach. An understanding of the gospel and evangelism is essential, because the first step in discipleship is to give one's life to Christ. Also, Scripture and prayer are essential because they are how God speaks to believers and how believers speak to God. For the fourth area, I focused on the church. Originally, I called this class "Church Membership" because I wanted to emphasize being a member of a church. However, I changed it to "Fellowship" to encompass a broader idea of what it means to be part of the body of Christ.

For the last two weeks I wanted to speak practically on how to take disciple-making and apply it in different contexts. Much of my desire for this came from the fact

that I have had to learn this concept myself. As someone who came from the Bible Belt to Northwest Indiana, I had to learn how to talk and interact with a different type of person. I also spent over a decade with my primary focus being youth ministry. The way I taught students is different than the way I preach to a broad group and different from the way I teach a class of adults. As a father, I have also been learning how to communicate with young children.

I wrote my curriculum and submitted it to several pastors in our local association. I was thankful that four pastors were willing to look over the material and give me their thoughts. I chose local pastors for a couple of reasons. First, each man I selected I know personally and respect their commitment to disciple-making. Second, each of them has a sense of what ministry in this area looks like and generally what the spiritual needs of this region are. My second goal was met as 100 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. They also gave me advice and feedback on how I could improve the curriculum, for which I am incredibly grateful.

### **Goal 3: Equipping Members of Ross Baptist Church**

The class was taught over a period of eight weeks. I did not know how many to expect for a class like this. First, we had never had a class like this—a Doctor of Ministry project had not been completed at Ross Baptist Church in the past. Also, I planned to record the teaching for those who could not make it. I knew it would be possible that recording the class would make people nervous, particularly if they spoke up. To mitigate this and to make the teaching as clear as possible, I had the camera on myself without panning to the class. It had also been a long time since we had a Wednesday night gathering of any kind. Until we met on Wednesday September 28, 2022, we had not met on a Wednesday since March 4, 2020. Since had we resumed meeting on Sundays, there had not been an overwhelming desire among many to resume Wednesdays as well. Also, the group that used to come was an older group that was now even two years older. I was

not sure if those who used to attend would come back, or if new individuals would participate. I was hopeful that there would be interest not only in the subject matter but also in being part of my project. I was pleasantly surprised by the turnout. Twenty-nine people attended at least one session. This was very encouraging as many who attended had never, in my recollection of my time at the church, come to a Wednesday night gathering before. The attendance fluctuated from week to week with an average of 18 per week. Some only came for one week. While I am grateful that so many came at least once, I wish more people would have attended every week. The material would have been helpful for everyone. On the eighth and final week of my class, I re-administered the DMA. The only difference between the pre- and post-survey was a question related to whether the participant had either attended in person or watched online all eight sessions. For the purpose of this analysis, I included only surveys for which I had matching ID numbers on both the pre- and the post-survey. Another stipulation for inclusion in the final results was that the participant indicated that he or she had completed all eight sessions, either in person or online. Ten post-surveys met both requirements. Unfortunately, one participant did not answer two questions on the pre-survey. Another participant failed to answer one question on the post-survey. Because of this, I included those participants' answers in the mean comparisons, but not in the *t*-test. Table 5 indicates the six largest statistical changes.

Table 5. Largest changes in scores

Statement	Pre-survey	Post-survey	Change
14. I need help learning how to explain the gospel to another person.	1.80	4.00	2.20
7. I have been intentionally disciplined by another individual to be a disciple of Christ.	3.60	5.20	1.60
16. I am comfortable explaining how to teach another person how to study the Bible.	3.30	4.80	1.50
17. I need help learning how to teach another person to study the Bible	2.30	3.70	1.40
23. I need help learning how to teach another person about the local church	3.00	4.10	1.10
24. I want to disciple another believer	3.60	4.70	1.10

The biggest change occurred with statement 14. While participants indicated on the pre-survey that they knew what the gospel is, they also indicated needing help explaining it. The increase on this statement was encouraging, as evangelism is key to the work of disciple-making. I also believe it affirmed my decision to walk the participants through the Three Circles evangelism tool.

Statement 16 also saw an increase. Ross Baptist Church members would affirm the value of Scripture. I knew over the years, however, that many struggled to study the Scripture on their own. Anecdotally, one challenge of finding small group teachers has been the insecurity of members to teach others the Bible. I was thankful to see the increase with this statement and am hopeful that it will lead to a greater confidence among members to teach. Statement 17 also saw an increase. Both statements 16 and 17 relate to the confidence to teach others. As Bible study is so important to disciple-making, it was good to see those items increase.

Another increase worth noting concerned statement 23. While the participants scored fairly well on the pre-survey, I sensed that some did not adequately understand until after the class what the *local church* was. While most participants are familiar with the programs and traditions of our particular church, in conversations over the years I have realized that most cannot clearly explain the mission and purpose of the local church. Also, while the group that comes on Wednesday nights probably values the local church, they might not know how to articulate that. As church attendance nationally trends downward, it was wonderful to train participants how to tell others about the local church.

The increase for statement 24 indicated a growth in participants to disciple other believers. Only one individual in the post-survey did not at least slightly agree with the statement. This is encouraging because the project had in mind showing members that disciple-making is not just something for pastors or leaders—each believer is tasked with

disciple-making. While the increase in competency is important, an increase in desire is essential if a culture of disciple-making will emerge.

The second largest change was statement 7. This change is a bit confusing. The statement was designed to get an understanding of the participant’s experience with disciple-making. I did not expect a change in this question, yet it had the second largest change. I believe that is probably because participants were unclear on what it means to be a disciple or what being disciplined even is. It seems that by the end of the class many participants were aware of disciple-making that had occurred in their lives although at the time they did not see it as disciple-making. I am glad if that is the case, but it is surprising for that to be one the largest changes.

Some statements registered very little change. Table 6 lists the statements that had the smallest changes between the pre- and post-surveys.

Table 6. Smallest changes in scores

Statement	Pre-survey	Post-survey	Change
8. It is important for every believer to be disciplined by another believer.	5.10	5.00	-.10
11. The pastor is personally responsible for discipling each member of his church.	4.44	4.22	-.20
15. I know how to study the Bible	4.50	4.80	.30
19. I am comfortable explaining how to pray to another person.	4.80	5.10	.30
12. I know what the Gospel is.	5.10	5.50	.40
21. I know what the local church.	5.10	5.50	.40

Much of this analysis indicates that participants did not experience much change in what they saw as their personal knowledge. Three of the four statements that were designed to indicate personal knowledge saw little change. This information, compared with the analysis of the largest changes, shows that class was not primarily providing new information for personal edification, but served to give participants the confidence to share that with others. The most interesting result is that, after the post-project survey,

class participants on average scored lower on their belief in the importance for every believer to be disciplined by another believer. This is a difficult result to understand. It may be that because participants were convinced they had a good understanding of the concepts discussed in the class so that they no longer sensed a need to be disciplined. I believe that this is due to a strong emphasis during the session on instructing participants on how to be a teacher of spiritual disciplines, but not enough emphasis on the importance of being a continual learner of spiritual disciplines. Another small negative change was the statement on the pastor being personally responsible for discipling each member. An emphasis in the class was that every member, not just the pastor is to make disciples. I believe the question was confusing to participants, as two different individuals, one on the pre and one on the post survey, left it blank. The question should have been better phrased to indicate that every one, and not just the pastor, is to make disciples.

The third goal was successful as the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a significant difference between pre- and post-survey results. Eight participants completed all eight sessions and all survey questions on both the pre- and post-surveys. The *t*-test demonstrated a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores:  $t(7) = -6.818$ , and a *p*-value one-tail of .0001, which is less than .05.<sup>1</sup> This score indicates the participants increased their knowledge of disciple-making.

### **Strengths of the Project**

There were several strengths to the project. The first strength was that it gave me an opportunity to learn more about my context. I have been at Ross Baptist Church in some capacity for almost ten years, but this project gave me a chance to find out information I did not know. In particular, I had never administered a survey to discover

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 3

the disciple-making attitudes and practices of the congregation. Because of having to perform and analyze this survey, I feel more prepared to repeat the practice in the future.

An additional strength of the project was the time spent exegeting several passages. With the many responsibilities incumbent upon pastors, it is often hard to carve out sufficient time to look at a text. The pressure of weekly sermon preparation can result in not going as deeply into a text as desired. In comparison to my normal sermon preparation routine, I had much more time to look at each of these passages, which was helpful for me and increased my resolve to carefully guard sermon study time in the future. Another limitation pastors face is in the area of resources. Both the church and I personally have tight budgets that do not allow the purchase of as many commentaries as I would desire. For this assignment I utilized the library at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for books I do not own in my personal study. That provided me more insight than I normally would have. I hope to continue to build up my library because I have more appreciation for how valuable such resources can be.

A third strength of the project was the time spent reading what others had written on the subject of disciple-making. Working through that much literature and learning how better to take notes has been helpful for me. I have incorporated these disciplines into reading outside the class and found it to be helpful. I also am thankful for all those who have written on the subject. The Navigator's Wheel illustration in particular was incredibly helpful as a visual aid that I used most weeks.<sup>2</sup>

A fourth strength of the project was the discipline of writing a curriculum. I had done some work in lesson planning in previous classes, and had taught classes before, but I had never developed and taught an eight-week class. The task was initially very daunting, especially in the beginning. When I submitted my curriculum to the expert panel, I not only received critical feedback, but also encouragement in what I was doing. It was humbling

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<sup>2</sup> Navigators, "The Wheel Illustration," accessed November 29, 2022, <https://www.navigators.org/resource/the-wheel-illustration/>.

to have men I respect speak so highly of something I had written. This experience caused me to desire to write other curricula on different subjects in the future.

A fifth strength was that I recorded each class. I wanted to record the classes in case someone missed a week so they could watch the session. I linked the videos from a page on our website, so the only way to find them was really to look for them intentionally. Even with that, each class was viewed multiple times online. Many told me on Sundays that while they missed the previous week's sessions, they planned to watch it online. Our church has been slow to adapt technology. It really took COVID for us to post sermons each week. There is value in recording classes, and I think I will look to record similar type classes for online viewing in the future.

A final strength of the project was the focus on prayer in the curriculum. Anecdotally, several people remarked that the session on prayer the most helpful week. In working on the curriculum, the most exciting portion for me was the opportunity to teach participants how to pray the Bible. This method of prayer has been an important help to me, and I expected it to be similarly helpful for the participants. I will certainly use that lesson in the future.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

There were some weaknesses with the project. One weakness was that I had only one week to formally promote the project. I had planned on two weeks, but I contracted COVID, which prevented me from personally promoting the class during one of the weeks I had planned to do so. Therefore, I did not provide as much time for participants to gain interest for the project as I had planned. Also, while many knew I was enrolled in a doctoral program, some did not. My announcement not only had to explain the project, but also explain that I was pursuing an advanced degree.

The fact that I spent eight weeks teaching was also a bit of a weakness. To an extent, I was concerned that a longer project would have meant less consistent participation. Eight consecutive weeks was a long commitment, particularly when many

had never attended on Wednesday nights, and we had not had any activities on Wednesday nights in over two years. Nevertheless, I felt somewhat rushed to get through the material. Each session aimed for about an hour, but the sessions on evangelism, Scripture, and prayer could have easily gone for much longer. In particular, I wish I had an entire session just on clarifying the gospel, and a second week on how to do evangelism. Similarly, I would have preferred an entire session on the doctrine of Scripture and then another on how to read and study Scripture. Eight weeks might have been the best solution available, but still limited what could be covered.

Another weakness was how many surveys were either incomplete or incorrectly filled out. There was not an individual question that was skipped multiple times, so it is hard to know if the questions themselves were confusing. I did not go over the questions with participants because I did not want to influence their answers. Not covering the questions might have contributed to missed questions. I did answer a couple of questions from individuals when I administered the survey, but there were more incomplete surveys than I anticipated. Particularly discouraging were a few surveys where the person indicated that he or she watched/viewed all eight sessions, but I was not able to include them because the person neglected to put an ID code down on either the pre- or post-survey.

A final weakness was that the class was on Wednesday night. We do not have as many people on Wednesdays, so there was probably less participation than if the class had been on Sundays. I considered using the Sunday school time to teach the class, but ultimately decided against it as I did not want to disrupt what the teachers were doing in their classes. It also was going to be a challenge to accommodate kids and guests if I had the class on Sunday mornings. As a result, there were probably fewer participants to complete all eight sessions than if I had taught on Sunday mornings.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

While the experience overall was good for myself and for my church, there are some things I would do differently if I were to complete the project again. The first change

I would make would be to have more promotion of the event. I planned to promote for two weeks but I was prevented from doing that. If I had to do it again, I would take three to four weeks. I wished that not only had I presented the project, but that I had spent weeks getting people excited for it. There was enthusiasm for the project with only a week's notice, and I think there could have been more if I had spent more time promoting the class.

A second aspect I would do differently would be to emphasize that I would be scoring the pre- and post-results of those who had attended or watched all eight sessions. Two individuals wrote on their survey that they had missed only one class. Why I am thankful for their commitment, for the sake of the survey consistency I did not use their post-survey results. Many people were enthusiastic to help me in this endeavor, so I think it likely that more participants would have made sure to attend or watch all eight sessions if they knew that it was necessary to be counted in the statistical analysis. I think that would have also encouraged more people to use the online resource after an absence even though, while I know some utilized it, many are averse to using online resources and failed to watch the recorded sessions after an absence.

A third change I would make would be to use more variety in survey methodology. I chose an exclusively quantitative approach to the research. While this gave me hard numbers to work with, it did not provide as much insight into why participants answered as they did. If I had to do over again, I would first have interviewed some members of my church, possibly deacons or Sunday school teachers. I would ask about their attitudes and practices of disciple-making. That approach would have given me more insight into the situation and possibly allow me to ask better survey questions. I also wish I had given the opportunity for formal feedback on the entire course in the post-survey. Several people commented how helpful the class was, in particular the discussion of prayer, but it would have been helpful to provide an opportunity for written feedback from all the participants.

A final change would be the length of the class. Meeting for eight consecutive weeks was too much of a challenge for many participants. At the same time, I sometimes felt rushed with the material. If I had to do it over again, I would make each class last an hour and a half instead of an hour and would have taught the class for six weeks instead of eight. This would provide one extra hour of total class time while lessening the number of weeks. For some, this might be a challenge to their attention span for that length, but with the extra time I might have been able to provide a short break during each session.

### **Theological Reflections**

The most important theological insight I gained from this project was the importance of personal disciple-making. Looking at the role of disciple-making in the context of the family all the way back in Deuteronomy 6 affirmed this as the plan God utilizes to grow believers. While churches can chase after new and supposedly better programs, the method of disciple-making is tried and true. Christians do not have the option of whether to be disciple-makers; rather, the issue is whether they will be obedient to the commands of God.

The most important passage in developing this project was the Great Commission found in Matthew 28. Here one sees that disciple-making involves teaching disciples all that Jesus commanded. While many churches are committed to a minimalistic approach when it comes to teaching, Christians are called to proclaim the entire counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Teaching involves at a minimum the transfer of information; information found in God's Word. The task for all of believers is to be participants in this endeavor.

Another important insight I gained was the importance of grace in disciple-making. Paul tells Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 2:1). Often the emphasis in disciple-making can start to drift into legalism, focusing only on external obedience. For some, the idea of being a disciple sounds like mere behavioral modification, similar to "turning over a new leaf" or developing New Year's resolutions.

Instead, being a disciple, as well as making disciples, is about growing in the grace of Jesus Christ. The gospel is what saves, and it is the gospel that sanctifies. In our obedience we do not leave our need for grace behind, we operate out of it.

### **Personal Reflections**

Developing this project taught me so much on the importance of disciple-making. As a pastor, it is easy to focus on the congregation as a whole, and to feel that focus is sufficient. It is important that I put the discipline of personal disciple-making into practice in my personal life. This project revealed that I have not done that as well as I could have. While I have discipled a few individuals, it has been inconsistent and sporadic. I was encouraged through this project to be more faithful to the task.

I also have been reminded that consistently developing a few individuals is more fruitful in the long run than seeking to draw a huge crowd. As a pastor, it is easy to get caught up in the numbers. Pastors are always discussing how many attend each week. While those numbers are not inconsequential, the more important task is discipling specific individuals. Jesus spoke to large crowds, but he gave greater attention to the Twelve and even more to the inner three of Peter, James, and John. This is a good reminder of the importance of personal disciple-making. As a pastor of a small church, it would be easy to compare numbers to that of other churches. I need to remember that what matters most is being faithful to train up others well, not to have great crowds of people. Crowd numbers can also be misleading. Many in a crowd have no spiritual depth and that is evident in that after a time many fade away. Paul tells Timothy, “The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:1). Instead of looking at numbers right now, I need to think three generations down the road. Am I investing in individuals so that they can teach others how to make disciples? I want what I do as a pastor not to fade when my life is over. Instead, I want to pass on what I have learned so that future generations will be changed by the Word of God.

I have also been convicted of the importance of family worship. As a pastor, many nights are filled with meetings and ministry opportunities. While meeting together as a family is hard, it is an essential element to raising a family in the Lord. While our current family worship practices are inconsistent, I am resolved more than ever to lead better in this area. Deuteronomy 6 also reminded me that I need to be intentional to weaving spiritual things into all of life, and to not compartmentalize those things to designated times.

Completing this project was the end of a long journey. I originally enrolled in seminary to pursue a master's degree back in 2006 but was unable to continue. A lack of funds and a lack of enthusiasm for the work meant that after a year I ceased studies. I did not restart my program until the summer of 2018. I was able to finish my master's in 2020, and immediately began work on my doctorate. While I am thankful to have finished this task, the speed at which I did so much academic work has left me tired. All this work has required attention; attention that could have been given to my church and family. While it has helped me to grow as a pastor, it would not have been possible without the support of leaders in my church. I am more grateful than ever for Ross Baptist Church and their love and encouragement to me. Going through this degree, while difficult, has caused me to want to encourage others in their academic work. I know it is easy to put it off or to get frustrated, but ultimately it is such a blessing to finish.

Finally, completing this project meant a lot of sacrifice for my family, particularly my wife. While this season has been enjoyable, I am thankful to move ahead in ministry and family life better balanced. Time away from family was used by God to give me a better appreciation for them. What I have learned now in two separate degree programs at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary will serve me well in the years to come.

## **Conclusion**

During most of my time with Ross Baptist Church, Wednesday nights have been sparsely attended meetings that catered almost exclusively to older members. Implementing this project has been a way to connect younger members with a mid-week service. It has also provided an opportunity to tackle a vital need for the future of Ross Baptist Church: to become a church of disciples who make disciples. I am so thankful for this opportunity to complete this project: for myself, my family, my church, and in service to the Lord. I pray that this project is part of what God uses to a legacy of disciple-makers at Ross Baptist Church.

## APPENDIX 1

### DISCIPLE-MAKING ASSESSMENT

The following instrument is the Disciple-Making Assessment (DMA). Some general questions are followed by a seventeen-question survey with a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose was to assess each member's level of theological understanding and confidence in disciple-making.

## DISCIPLE MAKING ASSESSMENT

### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding and practices of disciple-making of the participant. This research is being conducted by Andrew Moore at Ross Baptist Church in Gary, Indiana for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses.

*Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project. To remain anonymous, submit an identification number in place of your name. It is important to create an identification number so that your answers can be compared to a post-test after the teaching sessions on disciple making have been completed.

Identification # \_\_\_\_\_

### **Part 1**

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing an 'X' next to your answer.

1. To what age group do you belong?  
 A. 18-30  
 B. 31-40  
 C. 41-50  
 D. 51-60  
 E. 61-70  
 F. 71+
2. What is your gender?  
 A. Male  
 B. Female
3. How long have you been a Christian?  
 A. 1-5 years  
 B. 6-10 years  
 C. 11-20 years  
 D. 21+ years
4. How long have you been attending Ross Baptist Church?  
 A. 1-5 years  
 B. 6-10 years  
 C. 11-15 years  
 D. 16-20 years  
 C. 21+ years

Part 2

Directions: These questions ask for your opinion using the following scale:

SD	strongly disagree
D	disagree
DS	disagree somewhat
AS	agree somewhat
A	agree
SA	strongly agree

Please circle the appropriate answer in the chart below:

5. I consider myself a disciple of Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6. I can explain what it means to be a disciple of Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7. I have been intentionally disciplined by another individual to be a disciple of Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8. It is important for every believer to be disciplined by another believer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9. I have intentionally disciplined another individual to be a disciple of Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10. I am currently discipling at least one individual.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11. The pastor is responsible for personally discipling each member of his church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12. I know what the gospel is.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. I am comfortable explaining the Gospel to another person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. I need help learning how to explain the Gospel to another person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. I know how to study the Bible.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. I am comfortable explaining how to study the Bible to another person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. I need help learning how to teach another person to study the Bible.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. I know how to pray.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. I am comfortable explaining how to pray to another person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

20. I need help learning how to teach another person how to pray.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. I know what the local church is.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. I am comfortable explaining the local church to another person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. I need help learning how to teach another person about the local church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. I want to disciple another believer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

## APPENDIX 2

### CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

The following evaluation was sent to an expert panel of five local church pastors. This panel evaluated the course material to ensure it was biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practically applicable.

Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum clearly details how to make disciples.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to train others how to follow Christ.					

APPENDIX 3

T-TEST: PAIRED TWO SAMPLE FOR MEANS

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	80.375	98.25
Variance	151.9821	149.3571
Observations	8	8
Pearson Correlation	0.817572	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	7	
t Stat	-6.81836	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000125	
t Critical one-tail	1.894579	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000249	
t Critical two-tail	2.364624	

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## ABSTRACT

### DEVELOPING A DISCIPLE-MAKING PROGRAM FOR ROSS BAPTIST CHURCH IN GARY, INDIANA

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Donald S. Whitney

The purpose of this project was to develop a disciple-making program for Ross Baptist Church in Gary, Indiana. Chapter 1 presents the history and ministry context of Ross Baptist Church and the goals of this project. Chapter 2 provides biblical and theological foundations of disciple-making by means of an exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 2 Timothy 2:1-8, and Ephesians 4:1-12 applied to the thesis. Chapter 3 shows that disciple-making requires teaching believers the content of the Gospel, how to read and understand the Bible, how to pray, and the importance of being a part of the local church. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, recounting the content and teaching methodology of the specific course curriculum. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on completion of the specified goals. This project sought to train believers how to make disciples to the glory of God.

## VITA

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